

**General Amos W. W. Woodcock of Salisbury, Maryland  
(1883-1964)  
Gentleman, Soldier, Scholar, and Good Citizen**

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**This project for the M.A. degree in  
History has been approved for the  
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## Introduction

“... for all his wonderful service to his country and his special talents, there has never appeared a proper profile of this dedicated man.”

Salisbury historian Richard Cooper referring to Amos W.W. Woodcock in a letter to Dee Middleton, March 28, 1997.

It has become commonplace to think of World War One as a great watershed that separates culture, politics, and society into periods “before” and “after” the War. Many historians now refer to the “long 19<sup>th</sup> Century” that lasted until 1914 when World War One began, and the subsequent “short 20<sup>th</sup> Century” that began in 1914 and ended in 1990 with the fall of the Soviet Union. But this division is not so clear cut, and especially for people whose lives spanned this period there was a “struggle between these two worlds;” the excitement of modernity and liberation from the old, mixed with a longing for tradition and anxiety about the future.<sup>1</sup>

General Amos Walter Wright Woodcock was a native of Salisbury, Maryland whose life (1883-1964) was intimately intertwined with many of the major events of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; and in many cases he played a significant role in them. Woodcock lived his life with a strong (perhaps not quite Victorian, but at least an Edwardian) sense of morality, patriotism, and dedication to public service. As a devout Methodist he accepted the teachings of John Wesley that emphasized “duty” as important for a respectable life as prudence, earnestness, and moral fervor.<sup>2</sup> He served his community, state, and country in numerous capacities, including army officer, school board president, Assistant Attorney General, U.S. Attorney, Director of Prohibition, and college president.

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<sup>1</sup> Geoffrey Perrett, *America in the Twenties: Days of Sadness, Years of Triumph*. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982), 10-11.

<sup>2</sup> Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring*, (New York: Anchor Books, 1989), 130.

The few people who remember “The General,” describe him in a variety of ways. Salisbury historian Richard Cooper, a close friend of Woodcock’s, referred to him as being “a very lonely person,” “sentimental,” and “somewhat of a romantic, in a very broad scope of the word.” Woodcock’s ‘romanticism’ related not only to classical literature, music, and art, but also to his “appreciation and affection for young ladies.” Although this admiration for young women always seems to have been from a distance, there is a suggestion that Woodcock may at one time have proposed marriage to a local Salisbury girl. Nevertheless, despite occasional attempts, “he was always able to sidestep any intrusion into his bachelorhood.”<sup>3</sup>

But many other Salisbury residents, who did not know Woodcock as well as Richard Cooper did (and in some cases only knew Woodcock by reputation), describe him as “formidable,” “crusty,” “straight-laced,” “stern,” and “unbending.” It is undeniable that Woodcock had strong opinions, and that he was not afraid to state and defend them. Richard Cooper remembers him as “...a person who made no attempt to endear himself to the public at large; he stood up for what he felt was just and right, often contrary to the current mood...”<sup>4</sup> The *Baltimore Sun* went so far as to characterize him as having “a disconcerting habit of forming opinions and holding to them like grim death regardless of political exigencies.”<sup>5</sup> This reputation earned Woodcock few friends, but throughout his life he tried to emulate Abraham Lincoln and “apply to each problem his habit of direct, honest, and courageous thought and action.”<sup>6</sup>

Despite the fact that Woodcock was perceived as being “old-fashioned,” “Victorian,” and

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<sup>3</sup> Letter from Richard Cooper to Dee Middleton, March 28, 1997.

<sup>4</sup> Richard W. Cooper, *Salisbury In Times Gone By*, (Baltimore: Gateway Press, 1991), 109.

<sup>5</sup> “The New Boss of the Dry Army,” *Baltimore Sun*, July 6, 1930, p. 20.

<sup>6</sup> A.W.W. Woodcock, *Lincoln’s Birthday Address*, Feb. 12, 1949.

“set in his ways” he also understood human nature, and on several occasions demonstrated a strong sense of compassion, understanding, and a pragmatic approach to assessing human behavior. In his defense of a nervous sentry during World War One, and in many subsequent legal cases, he emphasized the importance of trying to see a situation from another person’s point of view. He was willing to give people a second chance as evidenced by his defense of a drunken college student and his desire to allow students who had failed at one college to enroll in another college, and give them the opportunity to change their ways. After World War Two he was determined to see that Japanese war criminals were not simply punished out of a sense of revenge, but were only held accountable to existing international laws. He befriended the family of a local minister ‘charged’ with homosexuality who was otherwise ostracized in the community. These were not the actions of a man who was rigid or narrow-minded, and he lived by his admonition that “human judgment is not so infallible that it should pass sentence for ever more” over someone who had failed one time.<sup>7</sup>

Woodcock was a highly educated man who had a diverse range of interests. On more than one occasion he was referred to as “a gentleman and a scholar.”<sup>8</sup> In addition to his academic degrees from the University of Maryland and Harvard Law School, he received an honorary degree of Doctor of Laws from Washington College (a previous recipient of this honor was Franklin D. Roosevelt).<sup>9</sup> He continued to read Latin his entire life, and in an interview in 1930 he named Virgil and Horace as his two favorite authors. When he lost a small wager with fellow officers at Camp Ritchie regarding the source of

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<sup>7</sup> “Memories of St. John’s College,” Amos W.W. Woodcock, *Evening Capital* (Annapolis), July 8, 1949, p. 6.

<sup>8</sup> “A Gentleman and a Scholar,” *Salisbury Times*, January 18, 1964, p. 4; Letter from Richard Cooper to Dee Middleton, March 28, 1997.

<sup>9</sup> “College to Honor Two Marylanders,” *Washington Post*, May 4, 1934, p. 12.

the quotation, “the evil that men do lives after them...” it was significant enough to be written up in the *Washington Post*.<sup>10</sup> In his inaugural remarks at St. John’s College, Woodcock proclaimed “the study of history the surest road to wisdom.”<sup>11</sup> An avid history buff, Woodcock at one time had plans to write a biographical sketch of General Edward Braddock,<sup>12</sup> and in his later years he continued to be an active member of the Wicomico County Historical Society. He had a great love for historic buildings and artifacts, and was the first president of the Company for the Restoration of Colonial Annapolis (CRCA), a group founded in 1935 that was dedicated to preserving Annapolis’ colonial heritage.<sup>13</sup>

Why has this Renaissance man of great accomplishment and public service been forgotten, even in his hometown? Perhaps it is because some of his most well-known efforts were not completely successful (and there are some who would say that they were wrong-headed failures). Perhaps because he never married and had no wife or children to carry on his name after his death he was simply forgotten. But it is very likely due to the fact that he held and expressed views that were considered to be “old-fashioned,” and that he was a bit of a gadfly. He was a Victorian man in the modern era; he experienced the “struggle between these two worlds,” and he was (for the most part) unable to modify the habits and perspectives with which he had been indoctrinated as a young man. He was perceived as being out of touch with the modern world and as having a haughty disdain

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<sup>10</sup> “Buys Drinks: Woodcock Loses Wager on Source of Quotation from Shakespeare,” *Washington Post*, Aug. 3, 1933, p. 22.

<sup>11</sup> “Inauguration: Remarks of Colonel A.W.W. Woodcock, October 20, 1934,” Maryland State Archives, MSA-SC 5698-7-87, Location: 3/47/7/22 (copy on file at the Edward H. Nabb Research Center for Delmarva History & Culture, Salisbury University, Salisbury, MD), 8.

<sup>12</sup> “Woodcock Plans Braddock Sketch,” *Washington Post*, July 27, 1931, p. 2.

<sup>13</sup> “The First Report of A.W.W. Woodcock, President, The Company for the Restoration of Colonial Annapolis,” *Proceedings and Minutes of the CRCA*, Historic Annapolis Foundation Archives, Annapolis, MD.



or modern life, and many people were probably just as glad to have him gone.

### **Family and Early Education**

Amos Wilson Woodcock (Amos W. W. Woodcock's father) was born in Trough Creek Valley, Pennsylvania on June 6, 1830 and moved to Baltimore in 1845 where he became a watchmaker and jeweler. In 1850 he married Sallie H. Cannon of Bridgeville, Delaware and they moved to Salisbury, Maryland the following year. They had three sons who survived to adulthood, but Sallie died sometime in the years 1858-1862. Amos W. Woodcock subsequently married Julia Anna Harris Wright (b. April 7, 1841) on August 27, 1862 and they had four children:

- 1) Sallie Ellen Woodcock, b. June 21, 1863 d. October 14, 1944
- 2) Julia Roselda Woodcock, b. August 9, 1865 d. June 21, 1942
- 3) Elizabeth Wilson Woodcock, b. November 21, 1881 d. November 14, 1946
- 4) Amos Walter Wright Woodcock, b. October 29, 1883 d. January 17, 1964<sup>14,15</sup>

The family homes were twice destroyed by fire (once in 1885, and the second time in the great Salisbury fire of 1886). Following the fire of 1886 Amos W. Woodcock purchased a lot on Main Street and built a three-story building; his jewelry store was on the first floor, and the family lived on the upper floors.<sup>16</sup> This building served as the family home until 1915. In addition to the downtown building, Amos W. Woodcock owned a large piece of land south of town between Middle and South Boulevards, from

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<sup>14</sup> William Lee Woodcock, *History of the Woodcock Family from 1692 to September 1, 1912* (Altoona, PA).

<sup>15</sup> Sallie (known to the family as "Sarah" or "Lala") married the Reverend Thomas E. Martindale, and after the death of the Reverend and their only child in 1917, she came to live with Amos W.W. Woodcock and his sister Elizabeth (known to the family as "Wilsie", or generally as "Auntie"). Julia (known to the family as "Rosa") married Dr. George W. Todd, and they had four children. Neither Elizabeth nor Amos W.W. Woodcock ever married; they shared the home that Amos had built in 1915 with their mother (until her death in 1925) and their older sister Julia (from 1917 until her death in 1944). Amos remained devoted to his sister Elizabeth throughout his life, and after her death in 1946 he wrote her biography entitled, *Elizabeth W. Woodcock of Chatillon: A Story of a Good Life*.

<sup>16</sup> A fourth story was added to the building sometime after 1916, and as of this writing (June 2009) the address of the building is 210 W. Main St.

the railroad tracks in the east to River Road in the west. This land served as a little family farm. Amos W.W. Woodcock eventually built his own home on the western edge of this land.

Two of the sisters, Sallie and Julia, were quite a bit older than Amos and Elizabeth, and were already married by the time Amos was ten years of age. Therefore, much of Amos' young home life was spent in the company of his mother and sister Elizabeth. Amos writes little about his father (who died in 1906), although he later recalled that "My father was as fine and devoted a family man as I ever knew," "strict and punctual in all his habits," "a devout Methodist," and that "in some respect my father was stern and puritanical, but he was an honest man with it all."<sup>17</sup> The father passed many of his personal characteristics on to his son, and these traits were the personal trademarks for which Amos was to become well known. 'Strict, punctual, devout, and honest' are all descriptions that were subsequently used to describe Amos W.W. Woodcock, and no doubt he was proud to be referred to as such.

In 1899, at the age of fifteen Woodcock graduated from Wicomico High School (Salisbury, Maryland), and that fall he matriculated at St. John's College in Annapolis. St. John's was, and still is, a private institution and although it no longer has a military atmosphere, it certainly did during the time that Woodcock was a student there. The students were organized into military-style units with students serving as officers, and they conducted military drills.<sup>18</sup> St. John's also had a strong emphasis on academics, and students were educated in a classic liberal arts curriculum. Both the military training and

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<sup>17</sup> "New Prohibition Head Big Small Town Man," *Washington Post*, June 29, 1930, p. M11.

<sup>18</sup> Four hundred and fifty two St. John's graduates served in the First World War; 90% of them as commissioned officers (of which Amos W.W. Woodcock was one), and twenty five were killed in the War *Rat-Tat* (1934), 21.

the academic rigor would serve Woodcock well throughout his life.

In a photograph from the 1901 edition of *Rat-Tat*, the St. John's student yearbook, Woodcock appears at the right end of the front row, seated with hands neatly folded and legs uncrossed, looking distinctly proper. He earned the nickname "Saint," presumably on the basis of his behavior and moral attitudes, and is quoted as saying "I want to be a great man in college, the president of the YMCA" (the YMCA was a popular campus organization). Most of the students at St. John's were from well-to-do families, and Woodcock was teased about being from "the barren wastes of the Eastern Shore..." The yearbook entries give the impression that Woodcock was quiet, somewhat aloof, and a goody two-shoes who is described by his classmates as having the qualities of "goodness, mumness, and oneness..."<sup>19</sup>

The image of Woodcock as a high-minded loner who had difficulty being 'one of the boys' persisted throughout his life. But Woodcock was filled with ability and ambition, and it was during his years at St. John's that these traits came to the fore. During these years Woodcock developed another trait that was to feature significantly throughout his life; the willingness to adopt an unpopular position and argue strongly for it. The yearbook reports that Woodcock lost a debate on whether the US should retain possession of the Philippines; he had argued against it.<sup>20</sup>

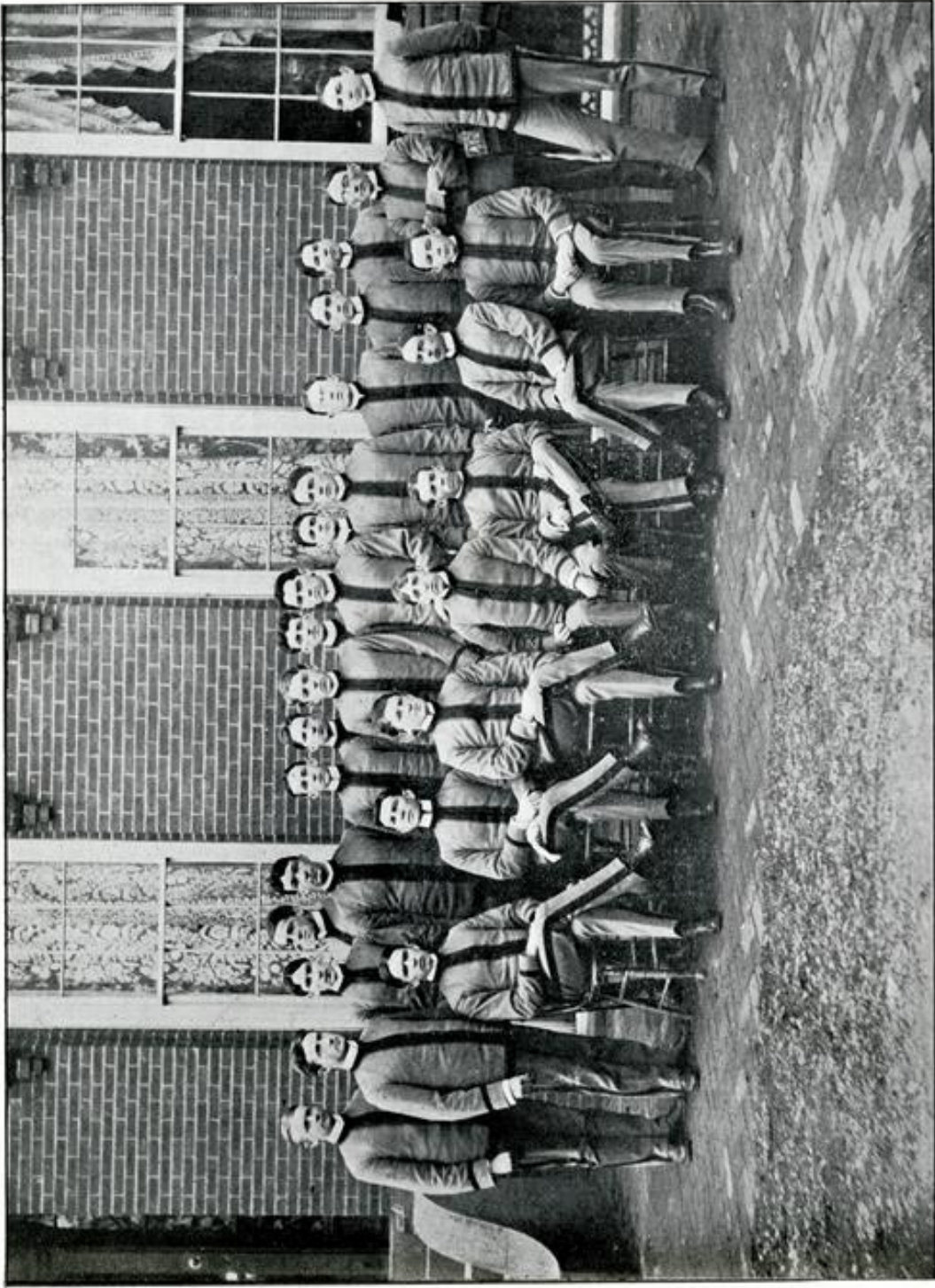
In the *Rat-Tat* of his junior year, for which Woodcock was the associate editor, he appears in a class photo in which he seems small and tight-lipped. The class historian reminisces about Woodcock as a freshman and refers to "little Amos Woodcock" as a "sad picture of homesickness and insignificance." Nevertheless, the historian

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<sup>19</sup> *Rat-Tat* (1901), 80.

<sup>20</sup> *Rat-Tat* (1902), 104.





Amos W.W. Woodcock's second year at St. John's College, Annapolis. Woodcock is seated at the far right. (Photograph from the 1901 edition of the St. John's College yearbook, *Rat-Tat*, p. 74).

acknowledges that “in him lay the qualities of mind and character that have made him such an honor to our class.” By his senior year these qualities of mind and character had Woodcock a stand-out in his class. The 1903 *Rat-Tat* says of Woodcock that he is “A man among men, a boy among boys; But swings his tongue with a mighty noise.” He served as Adjutant of the Battalion and was class valedictorian. Woodcock is referred to as one “of our most respected and honored classmates” and a “staunch, high-minded youth, whose devotion to duty and to unwavering consistency as a Christian has placed him high upon the altar of our affection and esteem.”<sup>21</sup>

Woodcock was developing confidence and perhaps even some popularity, as evidenced by his involvement in many activities during his senior year at the college. He was an associate editor of *The Collegian* (the school paper), member of the Philomathean Society (a secret literary society), Cotillion Club, Glee Club, and Mandolin Club. Though apparently not much of an athlete, he nevertheless served as the manager of the football and basketball teams, and (as he had hoped as a freshman), he was president of the YMCA. Numerous mentions are made of Woodcock’s other activities, many of which are memberships in various clubs, the nature of which are unclear. For example, he was a member of “Ye Ancient and Amalgamated Tribe of Newspaper Bummers” and was given the title of “Pre-eminent and Exalted Custodian of the Baltimore Sun.” He was captain of the Automobile Club, and President of the Liars Club.

Although Woodcock seems to have finally joined the camaraderie that was so

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<sup>21</sup> *Rat-Tat* (1903), 72.

much a part of student life at St. John's, and he had earned the respect of other students and the faculty, they continued to find him somewhat of a dandy. Several jibes are made about his personality, such as his 'Future Vocation' being given as "drunkard," and in a humorous recap of the year it is noted that on "March 13, Amos Woodcock yielded in an argument for the first time in his life." In one of the yearbook entries entitled "Can You Inform Me," the question is asked, "Wherein Woodcock deserves his good opinion of himself?" In the class photograph his classmates are slouched back in their chairs, but Woodcock sits bolt upright with his trademark tight-lipped smile.

Despite Woodcock's academic achievements and apparent ambition he later admitted that he "had no very definite plan" as to what he was going to do after graduation.<sup>22</sup> In the summer of 1903 he worked for the Ohio Railroad Company in West Virginia, but felt that his education had prepared him for something greater than writing down the numbers of the box cars.<sup>23</sup> In the fall of 1903 Woodcock traveled to Peekskill, New York to join the faculty at Worrall Hall Military Academy where he taught math, English, and history. He also coached the football team and was the chapel organist. After only a year at Worrall Hall he happily returned to St. John's as an Instructor in mathematics and Latin. He was promoted to assistant Professor of Mathematics the following year, and remained on the St. John's faculty for the next seven years.<sup>24</sup> Earning faculty status did not protect Woodcock from the jibes of the students; in 1910 the editors of the *Rat-Tat* spelled out the names of their two Mathematics professors

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<sup>22</sup> "Memories of St. John's College," Amos W.W. Woodcock, *Evening Capital* (Annapolis), June 21, 1949, p. 3.

<sup>23</sup> Biographical Sketch of Amos W.W. Woodcock, written by Nevins Todd, Sr., March 21, 1964.

<sup>24</sup> *Rat-Tat* (1910), 35; An obituary for Amos W.W. Woodcock, written by Dr. Nevins Todd, Sr., Woodcock's nephew (the son of his sister Julia) refers to Woodcock having accepted a job as a tutor in Upstate New York for the summer after his graduation from St. John's, for which he was never paid. According to Dr. Todd's account, Woodcock then worked for a short time with a railroad company in West Virginia before returning to teach at St. John's in the fall of 1904.

(**AMOS** **WALTER** **WRIGHT** AND **WADDELL**), highlighting specific letters to express their impression of Woodcock's personality. The 1911 edition of *Rat-Tat* poked fun at Woodcock in a brief poem that refers to him as "Amos, the love-sick guy." Despite the humorous approach, there is a hint of Woodcock's loneliness.<sup>25</sup>

Perhaps Woodcock's most notable achievement during his teaching days at St. John's took place outside of the classroom. In 1909 a fire broke out in McDowell Hall, one of the oldest buildings on the campus and home to the college's King William collection of 17<sup>th</sup> century books. Woodcock "formed a bucket brigade, rushed into the burning building, (and) saved the King William books."<sup>26</sup> This quick action, in the face of "considerable discomfort and some danger" made Woodcock "something of a hero" among the students and faculty.<sup>27</sup>

During his teaching years at St. John's, Woodcock continued his own education, taking the train from Annapolis to Baltimore to take law classes at the University of Maryland. He received a Bachelor of Laws degree from the University of Maryland in 1910, and in 1911 (at the urging of his sister Elizabeth) he left St. John's to spend a year at Harvard University and earned an M.A. in Law.<sup>28</sup>

In December, 1912 one of Maryland's senators, Isidor Rayner, passed away and Salisburian William P. Jackson was selected by the Governor to fill the vacancy. Jackson knew Woodcock from having lived in the same town.<sup>29</sup> Jackson had purchased the lot on

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<sup>25</sup> *Rat-Tat* (1911), 174.

<sup>26</sup> "Second Youngest and Third Oldest," *Time Magazine*, May 9, 1932, pp. 34, 36.

<sup>27</sup> "Memories of St. John's College," Amos W.W. Woodcock, *Evening Capital* (Annapolis), June 23, 1949, p. 9; "Memories of St. John's College," Amos W.W. Woodcock, *Evening Capital* (Annapolis), June 24, 1949, p. 7.

<sup>28</sup> Charles B. Clarke, *The Eastern Shore of Virginia and Maryland: Personal and Family History*, vol. 3, (NY: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1950), 1; "Memories of St. John's College," Amos W.W. Woodcock, *Evening Capital* (Annapolis), June 28, 1949, p. 7.

<sup>29</sup> "New Prohibition Head Big Small Town Man," *Washington Post*, June 29, 1930, p. M11.



which the Woodcock's home had been before it burned in 1885, and Jackson subsequently built his own mansion there (the site is now occupied by the rectory of St. Francis de Sales Church). Woodcock went to Washington as Jackson's secretary; a position he held until the summer of 1914 when he returned to Salisbury and began the law firm of Woodcock and Webb.<sup>30</sup>

In the spring of 1915, as the firm of Woodcock and Webb began to flourish, Woodcock purchased his first automobile. With his newly found mobility he began to seriously consider building a new home outside of the city of Salisbury, and construction soon began on the home that was later to be named *Chatillon*, on the family land along the Wicomico River south of town. Woodcock, his mother, and his sister Elizabeth moved into the new home in time for Christmas 1915.

### **Military Experiences**

"He has never taken a position in the rear, whether in military or civil life."

From an article "Captured by Tanks" describing Woodcock's participation in a war game exercise. *Washington Post*, Aug. 17, 1939, p. 8.

Woodcock's military experiences undoubtedly played a large role in shaping his behavior and personality. At the time of his departure for Japan in 1945, at the age of 62, he was referred to as being "...as lean and straight as though he had just come from a training campaign,"<sup>31</sup> and he is remembered for his formal, military bearing and his sense of patriotism and discipline. At his home in Salisbury he began the day with a flag-raising ceremony, which was often attended by the neighborhood children whom he taught how to salute.<sup>32</sup> Woodcock's military training began while he was a student at St.

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<sup>30</sup> Amos W.W. Woodcock, *Elizabeth W. Woodcock of Chatillon: A Story of a Good Life*, (Salisbury, MD: Salisbury Advertiser, 1947), 39-40.

<sup>31</sup> "Gen. Woodcock To Prosecute Jap Leaders, *Washington Post*, Dec. 2, 1945, p. M3.

<sup>32</sup> Interview with Mrs. Audrey Stewart, May 19, 2005.

John's, and he remained closely tied to the military for the remainder of his life. Like many men of his generation, World War One played a formative role, and he later identified the military as one of the things that had guided him throughout his life.<sup>33</sup>

Woodcock's notions of authority and duty were reinforced by the army, and strengthened his belief that those in positions of leadership should demonstrate, encourage, and in some cases demand, good behavior. Likewise, he felt it was incumbent upon people to obey the rules and moral obligations that were set for them. Although he did not always agree with the decisions of superior officers, he admitted that "It is so much simpler (*sic*) to have authority decide for you rather than to make a town meeting of it." During his military service, and especially in subsequent years when he was in positions of authority, he felt entitled to make decisions by which other people should abide.

Salisbury was the home of Company I, a National Guard unit that had been founded in 1901. Company I was part of the 1<sup>st</sup> Maryland Regiment, which was made up of several companies from around Maryland including Company L (from Crisfield), and Company M (from Annapolis). Maryland had two other National Guard regiments at this time; the 4<sup>th</sup> and the 5<sup>th</sup>, both of which were from Baltimore.<sup>34</sup>

When Woodcock joined Company I in the summer of 1904 it was a rather informal organization, and was more like a social club than a military unit.<sup>35</sup> By virtue of his experience at St. John's College, Woodcock was given the rank of sergeant by then-captain Louis P. Coulbourn, who also owned a clothing store across the street from the

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<sup>33</sup> "Memories of St. John's College," Amos W.W. Woodcock, *Evening Capital* (Annapolis), June 8, 1949, p. 3.

<sup>34</sup> *115<sup>th</sup> Infantry USA in the World War*, (Baltimore: Read Taylor Co., 1920), 15-18.

<sup>35</sup> All of the information in this section comes from "Golden Days" by Amos W.W. Woodcock unless specifically cited.

Woodcock's Main Street jewelry store and home. Woodcock immediately distinguished himself during exercises in Manassas, Virginia in the summer of 1904. Captain Coulbourn later claimed that "The military training of First Sergeant A.W. Woodcock, who joined the company this summer made it possible for him to be of special service to me and to the company."<sup>36</sup> There was no pay for National Guardsmen other than when the Company was away at training camp during the summer. Even then the pay rate was only one dollar per day (though it was later raised to \$1.25 per day).

Although he was away for much of the year (either as an instructor at St. John's College or a law student at the University of Maryland), Woodcock trained with the Company during its 10-day summer camps from 1904 through 1915. During these training exercises the National Guard units trained with the Regular Army, giving the civilian soldiers the opportunity to train with professional soldiers. It was during these training exercises that Woodcock met many of the officers with whom he would later serve in the First World War. Woodcock greatly respected and admired the professional officers and learned much by observing them. Company I was often relegated to a minor role in most of the maneuvers, and Woodcock admits to their "unprofessional" nature, but he developed a great love for the National Guard, its officers, and men.

The men of Company I apparently recognized Woodcock's military prowess and leadership skills, and in the fall of 1906 he was elected 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant (it had been the custom since the Civil War that National Guard units elected their own officers). In the spring of 1915, after completing law school and returning to Salisbury to begin his legal practice, Woodcock was elected captain of Company I, just in time for the Company's move into its new armory on the corner of South Division St. and Camden St. (currently

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<sup>36</sup> "In Times of War," *Salisbury Advertiser*, September 17, 1904, p. 1.

the site of the Wicomico County Public Library). The sinking of the *Lusitania* on May 7, 1915 increased the likelihood that the United States might ultimately be drawn into the war that had been raging in Europe for the past nine months, and the summer's training had a special air of urgency. The soldiers learned to dig trenches and were taught about the nature of the fighting on the Western Front.

In the summer of 1916 Company I was called to action; not to France, but to the Mexican border. On March 9, 1916 Pancho Villa had attacked the town of Columbus, New Mexico in retaliation for President Woodrow Wilson's support of General Venustiano Carranza's "Constitutionalist" government in Mexico. Fifteen Americans (and over two hundred of Villa's men) were killed in the attack. Wilson subsequently authorized the formation of the "Punitive Expedition" under the command of General John J. Pershing to track down and disperse Villa's band of rebels. The Regular Army was too small to pursue Villa and simultaneously guard the entire border, so National Guard units were mobilized and sent to join Regular Army troops on the border. Company I departed Salisbury in June 1916 for Eagle Pass, Texas along the Rio Grande. Despite intense last-minute recruiting efforts the Company had only about 60 men, and was probably accurately described by Dwight Eisenhower's recollection that "although most Guard regiments were poorly equipped and untrained, they had some semblance of organization." During its four-month service on the Mexican border Company I guarded bridges across the Rio Grande and participated in many training exercises. Captain Woodcock was in command of the Company, and in addition to assuring that they fulfilled their military role he intended to make the Company "a school for right living" and more specifically, "Christian living".

Pancho Villa and his men continued to elude Pershing's forces, and although General Carranza appreciated the political support of the U.S. government, the presence of American military forces in Mexico angered the citizens who perceived it as another example of gringo imperialism. Carranza subsequently demanded that the Punitive Expedition be withdrawn or his army (known as Carrancistas) would attack them.<sup>37</sup> The Punitive Expedition was finally recalled, and Company I returned to Salisbury in October of 1916. Woodcock had learned much about soldiering in the field, especially with regard tactics, discipline, and logistics and he later recalled that "the border was the best possible training for war."

The training that Woodcock and his men had gained on the border would soon be put to good use, as America was dragged into the World War. In February of 1917 Germany renewed its unrestricted submarine warfare, and like many Americans, Woodcock was aware that this "would bring us into the war." The revelation of the Zimmerman telegram finally overcame Wilson's hopes for neutrality and on April 6, 1917 the United States declared war against Germany. Although Woodcock understood the gravity of this decision he recalls this period of time as "the most stirring, and, in some ways, the most delightful of my life." He was confident in his abilities as a leader of men and he was ambitious to put them to the test, and like most of his men he shared "the dream of going to France to fight in the great war..."

The United States had to build up the size of its army before it could make a positive contribution to the Allies' cause in the war. In early 1917 the Regular Army was still extremely small; having only about 130,000 men (the armies of France, Germany,

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<sup>37</sup> Eileen Welsome, *The General and the Jaguar: Pershing's Hunt for Pancho Villa*, (New York: Little, Brown, and Co., 2006), 232.

Austria-Hungary, and Russia each had more than 4,000,000 men). In addition to these “regulars” the National Guard had 180,000 men; 80,000 of who were still in federal service and another 100,000 in various state regiments such as those in Maryland.<sup>38</sup> One of the first steps was to muster the state-controlled National Guardsmen into Federal Service. Company I was federalized on July 25, 1917 in a brief ceremony by the Salisbury mill dam. In the wave of patriotism that followed the declaration of war, Company I was brought up to a strength of about 150 men, and on September 9, 1917 they marched from their armory to the Salisbury train station, and boarded a train bound for Camp McClellan, Alabama.

During this time the army underwent a major reorganization. General Pershing had decided that to effectively fight on the Western Front, the combat units had to be much larger than the traditional size. This led to the formation of the “square” division, in which each division consisted of four regiments, each made up of three battalions with four companies per battalion. Each company would contain about 250 men, making the total strength of the regiment approximately 3,000 men, and the entire division had a full strength of approximately 28,000 men (once accessory elements such as headquarters, signalers, artillery, machine gunners, etc. were added).

In the process of reorganization the traditional National Guard units were broken up and the three Maryland regiments were combined to form the new 115<sup>th</sup> Regiment, which became a part of the new 29<sup>th</sup> Division. Because this division was made up of soldiers from both the North and South it was nicknamed the “Blue and Gray” Division;

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<sup>38</sup> Edward M. Coffman, *The War to End All Wars: the American Military Experience in World War I* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1998), 18; *115<sup>th</sup> Infantry USA in the World War*, claims that the Regular Army had 85,000 officers and men, whereas the National Guard had approximately 368,000 officers and men at the time war was declared.

its symbol was a blue and gray yin-yang design. Company I was in the 3<sup>rd</sup> battalion of the 115<sup>th</sup> Regiment. The reorganization reduced the number of officers required, and in most cases the National Guard officers were replaced with Regular Army officers. Woodcock suffered a few “anxious days” during which he feared the “everlasting disgrace” of losing his command. But with “joy and contentment in my heart” he soon learned that he had been appointed Captain of the “new” Company I, which was then supplemented with men from other parts of Maryland to reach its full strength of two hundred and fifty men.

At this time Woodcock probably recalled his awkward days at St. John’s, when he had difficulty fitting into the rough and tumble physical lifestyle of young men, and although he was the commander he had a great desire to be close to his men and be accepted by them. He therefore accompanied them on their long hikes and slept on the cold ground, and he became toughened just as they did. Probably for the first time in his life Woodcock was “in pride of my own strength” and boasted that he was “able to stand the physical strain” as well as any man. But he was always the intellectual, and it is doubtful that many of his men understood him when he addressed them with a short speech that included the Latin quotation “*tros tyriusque nullo mihi discrimine*” from Virgil’s Aeneid [the phrase expresses the intention that all men will be treated equally].

The increased size of the company and addition of new men posed a challenge to Woodcock since he was no longer commanding a small hometown unit, but a much larger group of men, many of whom he did not know. Woodcock used the nine months that the 115<sup>th</sup> Regiment spent at Camp McClellan to instill an air of professionalism into his men. Discipline was much more severe than it had been in the pre-war days, and the

entire division was brought to a high level of efficiency. The training included long days of marching, hours of practice on the rifle range, and drilling on the use of the bayonet





Photograph of Captain Amos W.W. Woodcock taken ca. 1915.  
(Photograph courtesy of the family).

and gas mask. In all aspects of their training Woodcock emphasized “perfection in detail” and “pride in carrying out an order.”

It was while training at Camp McClellan that Company I had its first fatality. A young soldier from Salisbury named Olin Carey was guarding several National Guardsmen from New Jersey who were in the camp prison for being AWOL. While on a clean-up detail Olin was murdered by several of these men and they escaped from the camp. Olin’s body was sent back to Salisbury and he was buried in Parsons Cemetery, in what was “unquestionably the largest funeral ever witnessed in this city.”<sup>39</sup> The murderers were eventually captured and several of them were sentenced to prison terms.

By early June 1918 the 115<sup>th</sup> Regiment had completed its training and left Camp McClellan by train, bound for Hoboken, New Jersey, the port of departure for much of the American Expeditionary Force. Woodcock and Company I boarded an Italian ship named the *Dante Aligheri*. They joined a convoy of ships that zigzagged its way across the ocean to avoid German submarines, and finally arrived in Brest, France on June 27, 1918. From the port of Brest the men boarded the infamous French “Forty-and-Eights,” the small railroad cars that were labeled as capable of carrying 40 men or 8 horses (“40 hommes ou 8 chevaux”). For three days they traveled across France, finally disembarking in the Alsace region of eastern France.

Like many American officers Woodcock attended training school, where French and British officers tried to impart lessons they had learned through bitter experience to

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<sup>39</sup> “Murdered Soldier Victim of Robbery,” *Wicomico News*, May 2, 1918.

the newly arrived Americans. The school Woodcock attended was in the town of Chatillon-sur-Seine (he would later name his Salisbury home *Chatillon* in remembrance of this town and the surrounding countryside). After several weeks of officer training Woodcock rejoined Company I, which was posted to a quiet sector of the front in Alsace. Although still a captain, Woodcock was placed in charge of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, and a lieutenant named Joseph S. Phelps took over command of Company I.

While in this quiet sector Woodcock had the opportunity to utilize his legal skills. He defended a soldier who had been on guard duty at night and had shot a fellow American who stepped out into the darkness from an illuminated army hut. Woodcock successfully argued that the nervous sentry had merely followed orders by shooting at all lights, and was therefore not guilty of murder. This incident convinced Woodcock that questions of guilt or innocence should include a consideration of the circumstances under which the event occurred; he would later use this approach in other legal arguments.

Both the French and the Germans used this region of Alsace as a quiet sector, where troops were sent for brief periods of rest, and a spirit of live-and-let-live prevailed. Many American troops spent time in this area, learning how to live in the trenches and adjusting to the war (although it was a “quiet” sector there was sufficient small arms and artillery fire to keep everyone alert).

On September 12, 1918 the AEF began its first major offensive of the war; the reduction of the St. Mihiel salient to the southeast of Verdun. The 29<sup>th</sup> Division did not play a role in this operation, and it was still in reserve on September 26 when American forces launched the Meuse-Argonne offensive, which was to be the largest offensive by the AEF in the entire War. For an entire week over 1,000,000 American soldiers slowly

advanced against the entrenched Germans along a narrow front between the Argonne Forest in the west and the Meuse River in the east. The American advance was significantly hindered by German artillery located on high, wooded hills east of the Meuse River, and the American units were suffering heavy casualties as a result of this artillery fire. General Pershing decided to halt the advance until the German artillery could be dealt with. Part of the task of driving the Germans off the hills fell to the 29<sup>th</sup> Division.

The plan was for the three battalions of the 115<sup>th</sup> Regiment to cross the Meuse between the villages of Regneville (on the west bank) and Samogneux (on the east bank), with the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalions in the lead, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion (commanded by Woodcock) following in reserve. After passing through the village of Samogneux, the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalions were to advance to their objectives, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion would later “pass through” their lines and continue the attack against the German positions to the north. The three battalions crossed the Meuse at 5:00 am on the morning of October 8, 1918 but German artillery soon spotted them and began to shell the river crossing. One of the German shells landed in the midst of Company I just after it had crossed the bridges, killing four soldiers and wounding several others. Despite these losses the advance continued, and although there was poor communication among the advancing battalions, they reached their objectives by nightfall.

It was during this advance that Woodcock helped knock out a German machine gun nest with a 37 mm (“one pounder”) gun, earning him a War Department Citation for Gallantry in Action:

“At Bois de Consenvoye, France, October 8, 1918, while in command of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 115<sup>th</sup> Infantry. On the evening of October 8, when the battalion had reached the normal objective of the brigade, further advance into the open ground beyond was

prevented without heavy loss by an enemy machine gun located in a sunken road, which machine gun could not be reached by fire from the cover of the woods. Captain Woodcock, while endeavoring to find a way to silence the gun, locate a 37-millimeter gun and two members of its crew, which gun and crew had become separated from the battalion to which it had been originally attached. Captain Woodcock personally led the men and assisted them in carrying the gun in the face of the fire of enemy machine guns from the woods to a place in the open field, where the enemy gun in the sunken road could be reached by enfilading fire. He directed the laying of the gun and encouraged the gunner until the enemy machine gun was silenced, thereby allowing his battalion to resume the advance.”<sup>40</sup>

As his battalion attempted to advance on the morning of October 9<sup>th</sup> they were met with heavy German machine gun fire from Richene (Rechene) Hill. Woodcock called for an intense 15-minute bombardment, after which the 3<sup>rd</sup> battalion captured the hill without a single casualty. The battalion remained on the hill for the next few weeks, making a few modest advances, but generally just holding the line. When they were finally relieved on October 28<sup>th</sup> (which happened to be Woodcock’s 25<sup>th</sup> birthday) many of them were suffering from the cold weather, the flu, and exposure to mustard gas. Of the 800 men of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion who had crossed the Meuse on the morning of October 8<sup>th</sup>, only 400 remained; the others having been killed or wounded, or were sick with the flu.<sup>41</sup> On November 1, 1918 Woodcock was promoted to the rank of major.<sup>42</sup>

News of the Armistice arrived on November 11, and Woodcock recorded that the men took the news “very calmly” and that Woodcock himself spent that evening “very quietly thinking.” Like many members of the AEF, the men of the 29<sup>th</sup> Division were not able to leave for home right away, and it was not until May 1919 that the 115<sup>th</sup> finally

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<sup>40</sup> *Maryland in the World War, 1917-1919: Military and Naval Service Records*, vol. 2, (Baltimore, MD: Maryland War Records Commission, 1933), 2314-2315.

<sup>41</sup> Brief descriptions of these attacks are given in *Operations of the 29<sup>th</sup> Division East of the Meuse River, October 8<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup>, 1918* (Ft. Monroe, VA: Printing Plant Coast Artillery School), 190 passim. Detailed descriptions are provided in *29<sup>th</sup> Division Summary of Operations in the World War*, (American Battle Monuments Commission: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1944), 6-27 and also in *115<sup>th</sup> Infantry USA in the World War*.

<sup>42</sup> Woodcock, *Golden Days*, 206; *Maryland in the World War, 1917-1919*, pp. 2314-2315.

sailed home. During those six months the men drilled, were entertained by YMCA performers, watched movies, and held sporting events. Woodcock took the opportunity to travel to Nice, Paris, and London. Just before sailing for home, Woodcock was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel. After their arrival in Newport News the regiment proceeded to Fort Meade, and participated in a big victory parade in Baltimore. Company I returned to Salisbury by train, and each man was a civilian once again.

Shortly after the signing of the Armistice, a group of American veterans met in Paris to form the American Legion. The purposes of the American Legion (as described in the Preamble to its Constitution) are:

“To uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States of America; to maintain law and order; to foster and perpetuate a one hundred percent Americanism; to preserve the memories and incidents of our association in the Great War; to inculcate a sense of individual obligation to the community, state and nation; to combat the autocracy of both the classes and the masses; to make right the master of might; to promote peace and goodwill on earth; to safeguard and transmit to posterity the principles of justice, freedom and democracy; to consecrate and sanctify our comradeship by our devotion to mutual helpfulness.”

The goals of the American Legion reflected Woodcock’s own beliefs, but he preferred to emphasize the Legion’s role in keeping alive the memories of the past, and he was never comfortable with the phrase “one hundred percent American.”<sup>43</sup>

When the Legion’s National Headquarters chartered the Department of Maryland of the American Legion on May 24, 1919, Woodcock was one of the members of its Executive Committee. Wicomico Post No. 64 was organized in Salisbury in the fall of 1919; Woodcock was a Charter Member and served as its first Post Commander. A portrait of Woodcock painted by local artist Aurelia Bailey, and loaned to Post 64 by the

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<sup>43</sup> Amos W.W. Woodcock, *Diary of trip to Europe, 1927*; p. 21.

Wicomico Historical Society, still hangs (as of 2008) in the Post 64 social room.<sup>44</sup>

Woodcock also served as First Vice-Commander of the Department of Maryland from 1920-1921, and as Commander from 1921-1922.<sup>45</sup>

It was during Woodcock's term as Commander of the Maryland Department of the American Legion that Marshall Ferdinand Foch, the Allied Supreme Commander of World War One, traveled to the United States and embarked on a nation-wide tour. Foch came to America as a guest of the American Legion, and on November 22, 1921 Marshall Foch was present at the groundbreaking for the Maryland War Memorial Building, located on Gay Street in Baltimore. Woodcock was among the distinguished members of the welcoming party.<sup>46</sup>

Two socio-political issues of the 1920s and 1930s in which the American Legion was to play an important role were the "bonus" to be paid to World War veterans and Prohibition; both of which Woodcock supported. In the years following World War One, many veterans began pushing for a cash bonus to be paid to veterans. Many Americans sympathized with the plight of veterans (especially after the beginning of the Great Depression when veterans made up a disproportionately large percentage of the unemployed), but it was considered simply too expensive to provide a bonus to the millions of veterans.<sup>47</sup> Nevertheless, as early as May 1920 there were many bonus bills (also known as 'adjusted compensation' bills) being considered by Congress. In 1920 a bonus bill was passed in the House of Representatives, but its \$2 billion price tag doomed

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<sup>44</sup> "Gen. Amos W.W. Woodcock Remembered," *Daily Times*, June 21, 1983, p. 6.

<sup>45</sup> Walter F. Richardson, *History Department of Maryland: The American Legion, 1919-1934*, (Baltimore, MD: Weant Press, 1934), 10, 18-23, 110.

<sup>46</sup> "Great Ovation Given Foch by Huge Crowds" *Baltimore Sun*, November 23, 1921, p. 24, 6.

<sup>47</sup> Jennifer D Keene, *Doughboys, the Great War, and the Remaking of America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 173.

it in the Senate.<sup>48</sup> With strong support from the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars, a new bill was introduced in 1921. At this time Woodcock was serving as Maryland's Commander of American Legion, and he spoke out in favor of this Adjusted Compensation bill. After passing in both the House and the Senate the bill was vetoed by President Harding, and an override fell four votes short in the Senate.<sup>49</sup> In 1924 the World War Veterans Act passed (over Coolidge's veto) and promised the payment of a bonus to veterans, but because of the tight fiscal conditions the payments were to be delayed until 1945, or whenever the veteran died. President Hoover vetoed an "immediate payment" bill in 1931, but finally in 1936 a bonus bill was approved (over FDR's veto) that allowed veterans to receive immediate compensation (averaging \$583) for the lost wages they had incurred as a result of their service in the Great War.<sup>50</sup>

In the case of Prohibition, Woodcock was clearly at odds with the general consensus of the American Legion membership. At the 1931 American Legion Convention in Detroit the veterans weighed in on the two issues of the bonus and Prohibition; while they agreed to give up their demands for an immediate bonus payment, the members expressed their opposition to Prohibition in a vote of 1,008 to 394.<sup>51</sup> It was at this time that Woodcock was serving as the Director of Prohibition, and he must have felt some ambivalence in having to deny the wishes of his fellow veterans in deference to his duty to enforce the law.

In keeping with the Legion's strong patriotic and anti-communist agenda,

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<sup>48</sup> Paul Dickson and Thomas B. Allen. *The Bonus Army: An American Epic* (NY: Walker & Co., 2004), 21-24.

<sup>49</sup> "Displeased by Colonel Woodcock's Opposition to the Bonus" letter to the editor, *Baltimore Sun*, November 18, 1921, p. 10; "Colonel Woodcock Explains to a Critic What He Said About the Bonus in his Address at Fort McHenry," letter to the editor, *Baltimore Sun*, November 21, 1921, p. 6; Paul Dickson and Thomas B. Allen. *The Bonus Army*, 26-27.

<sup>50</sup> Dickson and Allen. *The Bonus Army*, 28-29, 37, 262.

<sup>51</sup> Dickson and Allen. *The Bonus Army*, 48-49; Keene, *Doughboys*, 185.



Woodcock supported a proposal to require Maryland's public school teachers (at any institution receiving state aid) to take an "oath of allegiance" to the United States.<sup>52</sup> Despite Woodcock's personal plea, the bill was vetoed by Woodcock's friend (and former running-mate in the 1919 election), Governor Harry W. Nice.<sup>53</sup>

Woodcock continued to be an active participant in veterans' affairs in the interwar years, attending various reunions and memorial services.<sup>54</sup> Among the most significant events of Woodcock's military career was a parade and ceremony in Salisbury on November 21, 1936 for the unveiling of a bronze honor roll of members of Company I. The plaque "contains 174 names of officers and enlisted men of the company" and was formally received by Amos W.W. Woodcock on behalf of the Company<sup>55</sup> (when the Armory was partially demolished in the early 1960s to make room for the new County Library, the plaque was moved to the new Armory located on Route 50 just west of Salisbury). As part of the ceremony, Woodcock received his commission as a brigadier general from Governor Nice, putting Woodcock in command of the 58<sup>th</sup> Brigade of the 29<sup>th</sup> Division, a position he would hold until 1942.<sup>56</sup> In his role as brigadier general, Woodcock participated in ceremonial activities, training exercises, and war games. Once, when he appeared on the parade ground the regimental band played "How Dry I Am" in respectfully mocking homage to Woodcock's Prohibition work.<sup>57</sup> Reporters seemed to take special glee in reporting that during war games in both 1939 and 1940,

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<sup>52</sup> "Nice to Hear Battle Today on Oath Bill," *Washington Post*, April 10, 1935, p. 15.

<sup>53</sup> "Nice Will Sign 325 Measures, Veto 80 Others," *Washington Post*, April 17, 1935, p. 15.

<sup>54</sup> "Veterans of the 29<sup>th</sup> Map Reunion Plans," *New York Times*, August 23, 1931, p. N2

<sup>55</sup> "Honor Roll Tablet To Old Company I To Be Unveiled At Armory On November 21," *Salisbury Times*, November 11, 1936, p.1; "Plans Complete for Unveiling of Co. I Tablet," *Salisbury Times*, November 18, 1936, p. 1; "Woodcock Named Militia Brigadier," *Washington Post*, Nov. 22, 1936, p. M15.

<sup>56</sup> "Old Company I of War Record Paid Tribute," *Salisbury Times*, November 23, 1936, p. 1; *Maryland in World War II, vol. I, Military Participation*, (Baltimore, MD; War Records Division, Maryland Historical Society, 1950), 9, 32, 280.

<sup>57</sup> "Md. Militia Parade Before Gen. Woodcock," *Washington Post*, July 20, 1937, p. 4.

Brigadier General Amos W.W. Woodcock was “captured” by the opposing forces.<sup>58</sup> But as the likelihood of U.S. involvement in World War Two increased, the training and the war games became more serious. Woodcock and his fellow officers began to learn about new tactics and technologies that had been developed in the interwar years; including such things as tanks, flamethrowers, air support, and paratroops.<sup>59</sup>

Following the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor, Woodcock was promoted to Acting Division Commander of the 29<sup>th</sup> Division,<sup>60</sup> and he undoubtedly had hopes of becoming the Division’s commander in Europe, but the army chose Major General Leonard T. Gerow to command the Division.<sup>61</sup> On March 1, 1942 Woodcock was assigned to command the New York Metropolitan Military District<sup>62</sup> and on August 25, 1942 he was placed on the army’s inactive list. Woodcock wrote to his sister that “I think I have never been so disappointed or felt so utterly beaten” as a result of being given an inactive status.<sup>63</sup>

The 29<sup>th</sup> Division (under the command of Major General Charles Hunter Gerhardt) was among the first to land at Omaha Beach on June 6, 1944, and suffered high casualty rates in fighting its way across France and Germany.

**Assistant Attorney General – Maryland (1920-1922)**  
**United States Attorney – Maryland (1922-1931)**

Although he had an active law firm in Salisbury, Woodcock must have felt the tug of state politics, and in 1919 he ran for State Comptroller on the same Republican ticket

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<sup>58</sup> “Captured by Tanks,” *Washington Post*, Aug. 17, 1939, p. 8; “Blitz Defense Hurls Back U.S. “Invader,”” *Washington Post*, Aug. 21, 1940, p.1.

<sup>59</sup> “Second Corps Will Exhibit Modern War,” *Washington Post*, Aug. 19, 1941, pp. 1, 9.

<sup>60</sup> “Reckord to Head 3d Corps Area; Pratt to Get New Command,” *Washington Post*, Jan. 6, 1942, p. 5.

<sup>61</sup> “Gen. Gerow To Command 29<sup>th</sup> Division,” *Washington Post*, Feb. 20, 1942, p. 6.

<sup>62</sup> “Chief of 29<sup>th</sup> Transferred To 2d Corps,” *Washington Post*, March 3, 1942, p. 2.

<sup>63</sup> *Maryland in World War II, vol. I, Military Participation*, 280; *Diary of Brigadier General Amos W.W. Woodcock, Trip to Tokyo, Japan*, letter dated January 5, 1946, p. 90.

as gubernatorial candidate Harry W. Nice and candidate for Attorney General Alexander Armstrong.<sup>64</sup> Both Nice and Woodcock lost to their Republican opponents (Nice losing to Albert C. Ritchie and Woodcock losing to E. Brooke Lee), but Armstrong was elected to be the new attorney general for Maryland.

Despite the fact that Woodcock was a “dry,” and Armstrong was a “wet,” Woodcock must have made a favorable impression on his running mate because less than a year later (on September 1, 1920) Woodcock was appointed Assistant Attorney General for Maryland, joining a team of three other Assistant Attorneys General under the direction of new Attorney General Armstrong. Woodcock served as counsel to the state’s Conservation Commission and also represented the state in all cases and proceedings on the Eastern Shore.<sup>65</sup>

As part of his duties, Woodcock wrote the legal opinions that expressed the State Law Department’s interpretation of Maryland’s laws. The written legal opinions of the Attorney General’s Office appear over the Attorney General’s name, but they were usually written by his assistants, and although it is therefore impossible to know which opinions were actually written by Woodcock, it is likely that he wrote all those dealing with conservation and the Eastern Shore. In 1920 there were opinions regarding the lawfulness of the use of an anchored or drifting boat to hunt ducks in the Wicomico River, the location of duck blinds, the possession of live skunks out of season, and other questions regarding hunting and fishing.<sup>66</sup>

In 1922 Woodcock was given more substantial cases, among them the prosecution

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<sup>64</sup> “Crowd Sees Races at Rockville Fair” *Washington Post*, Aug. 28, 1919, p. 3.

<sup>65</sup> Alexander Armstrong, *Annual Report and Official Opinions of the Attorney General of Maryland, 1920*.

<sup>66</sup> Alexander Armstrong, *Annual Report and Official Opinions of the Attorney General of Maryland, 1920*. pp. 58-61, 66-67, 535.

of a Prohibition officer named Lawrence W. Gerth who was accused of shooting Horace Brown during an arrest. Brown was an African-American who Gerth claimed was in violation of the Volstead Act. Gerth was ultimately acquitted later that year.<sup>67</sup> While the other Assistant Attorneys dealt primarily with cases in Baltimore, Woodcock was responsible for all of the Department's litigation elsewhere in the state. Many of these cases dealt with fish and game laws, particularly oyster harvesting, hunting, crabbing, and pollution. Woodcock was kept busy due to the fact that "more rulings were given this year to the Conservation Commission and the State Game Warden than to any other Department of the State Government."<sup>68</sup> Woodcock also handled several cases in which the state was trying to recover money paid by the State Accident Fund for fraudulent insurance claims.<sup>69</sup>

A case that must have struck a chord with Woodcock involved a bonus payment to veterans of World War One. In 1922 a bill had been passed in the Maryland legislature that authorized a bonus payment to all Maryland residents who had served in the War, but it was decided that this issue should be placed as a state-wide referendum on the November ballot. The referendum was immediately challenged, and although a lower court denied the complaint, the Court of Appeals ruled that such a referendum was unconstitutional,<sup>70</sup> and Maryland never authorized a bonus for its veterans.

Woodcock was quickly making a name for himself in Maryland's legal and political arena, and he had apparently caught the attention of the Harding administration.

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<sup>67</sup> Alexander Armstrong, *Annual Report and Official Opinions of the Attorney General of Maryland, 1921*, pp. 19-20; 1922, p. 8.

<sup>68</sup> Alexander Armstrong, *Annual Report and Official Opinions of the Attorney General of Maryland, 1921*, p. 20, 23, 601, 30.

<sup>69</sup> Alexander Armstrong, *Annual Report and Official Opinions of the Attorney General of Maryland, 1921*, p.23; 1922, p. 6-7.

<sup>70</sup> Neils H. Debel, Bonus Legislation and the Referendum in Maryland, *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (Feb. 1923), 85-89.

President Harding chose Woodcock to become the new U.S. Attorney in Baltimore; Woodcock resigned from the Maryland Attorney General's Office effective October 1, 1922 and was sworn in as the new U.S. Attorney in Baltimore the next day.<sup>71</sup> Now that most of his work would be in Baltimore, Woodcock was concerned about keeping his close affiliation with the Eastern Shore. He initially had the intention of learning to fly as a way to travel around the state,<sup>72</sup> but this never came to fruition, and even though he lived in Baltimore he continued to make frequent trips to his Salisbury home by rail and ferry. All during this time, Woodcock's law partner back in Salisbury continued to build the practice of Woodcock and Webb.

Although Woodcock was a lifelong Republican, he never allowed his party affiliation to affect his sense of justice, and he applied the law strictly and equally to all. As U.S. Attorney, Woodcock was involved in cases involving patent violations,<sup>73</sup> financial disagreements,<sup>74</sup> anti-trust violations,<sup>75</sup> and violations of the White Slave Traffic Act (also known as the Mann Act, which made it illegal to transport a woman across state lines for an "immoral purpose").<sup>76</sup> Woodcock aggravated his fellow Republicans by prosecuting Clarence P. Gasch, a Republican Party leader from Prince George's County, Maryland, for embezzlement; despite the fact that Gasch's friends threatened that they would "get" Woodcock for this apparent breach of party loyalty.<sup>77</sup>

Woodcock received most of his notoriety for his zealous (some would say overzealous) enforcement of the prohibition of alcohol. After years of pressure from

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<sup>71</sup> Amos W.W. Woodcock, *Elizabeth W. Woodcock of Chatillon: A Story of a Good Life*, (Salisbury, MD: Salisbury Advertiser, 1947), 49.

<sup>72</sup> "Prosecutor Learns to Fly", *Washington Post*, Nov. 29, 1922, p. 3.

<sup>73</sup> "Radio Case Appealed in Baltimore Court," *Washington Post*, Nov. 7, 1924, p. 3.

<sup>74</sup> "Sues for a German Bank," *Washington Post*, Aug. 19, 1925, p. 9.

<sup>75</sup> "Fertilizer Inquiry," *Washington Post*, April 19, 1926, p. 13.

<sup>76</sup> "Man is Acquitted of Attack on Girl," *Washington Post*, Oct. 2, 1929, p. 26.

<sup>77</sup> "Republican Leader Guilty," *New York Times*, March 27, 1928, p. 31.

organizations such as the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) and the Anti-Saloon League, the U.S. Congress finally ratified the Eighteenth Amendment in January, 1919. This amendment, which actually took effect in January 1920, made it against the law to manufacture, sell, or transport "intoxicating liquors" in the United States. The terms by which the amendment was to be enforced were spelled out in the National Prohibition Act (generally referred to as the Volstead Act, named after its author, Republican representative Andrew Volstead from Minnesota), which was passed by Congress (over President Wilson's veto) in October 1919. Thus began the period known as "Prohibition," which was to last until December 1933 when the Twenty-first Amendment was ratified, repealing the Eighteenth Amendment.

Although the Eighteenth Amendment prohibited the "manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors" the mechanism by which the Amendment was to be enforced was open to interpretation. The second section of the Amendment stated that "the Congress and the several States shall have concurrent power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation." The "concurrent power" phrase was used to appease Southern legislators who were opposed to possible federal infringement on what they considered to be a states'-rights issue, but it also left open the possibility that some states might not enforce the amendment. The writers of the Amendment assumed that the states would enforce the law with their police and legal system, but some states (such as Maryland) did not pass enforcement legislation or increase funding for police to investigate violations. Even U.S. Attorney General William DeWitt Mitchell had to admit that there was "no legal way of compelling state legislatures to enact enforcement

statutes or to compel state authorities to aid in enforcement.”<sup>78</sup> Maryland’s Governor, Albert C. Ritchie, was adamant in his claim that although citizens were obliged to obey the federal law, the states were under no obligation to enforce the law.<sup>79</sup> In early 1930 the Commissioner of Prohibition complained to Congress that “we have no cooperation in the state of Maryland other than the sheriffs of some counties.”<sup>80</sup> As a result of state inaction, enforcement was left in the hands of the weak federal enforcement agency (initially part of the IRS), prosecution was left to the federal courts, and convicted violators ended up in federal prisons.<sup>81</sup> By taking advantage of the “concurrent power” clause in the Eighteenth Amendment, “wet” states such as Maryland were not only able to largely evade Prohibition, but also avoided having to pay for its enforcement.

As U.S. Attorney in Maryland, Woodcock was in the unenviable position of trying to enforce a federal law that was neither supported by any state law, nor strictly enforced by any state agency. Because Prohibition generally had little support, it fell upon the U.S. Attorney to “set the pace and establish the quality of criminal prosecution under federal law.”<sup>82</sup> If the U.S. Attorney did not actively garner the support of state agencies, or pressure them to enforce the law, Prohibition was a dead letter (as in was in many localities).

Despite the lack of state support for enforcement, Woodcock used his power as U.S. Attorney to prosecute violators of the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment. Reflecting his belief that

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<sup>78</sup> “Dry Transfer,” *Time Magazine*, July 7, 1930.

<sup>79</sup> “Ritchie and State Prohibition Enforcement,” transcript of a speech by Gov. Albert C. Ritchie, published by the Ritchie Citizenship League, 1929.

<sup>80</sup> Laurence F. Schmeckebier, *The Bureau of Prohibition: Its History, Activities, and Organization*, The Brookings Institute, (Washington; 1929), 67.

<sup>81</sup> Schmeckebier, *The Bureau of Prohibition*, 66-67; Richard F. Hamm, *Shaping the Eighteenth Amendment*, The University of North Carolina Press, (Chapel Hill; 1995), 227-271; Jack S. Blocker, “Did Prohibition Really Work?” *Am. J. of Public Health*, vol. 96 (2), Feb. 2006; 233-243.

<sup>82</sup> Albert E. Sawyer, “Report on the Enforcement of the Prohibition Laws of the United States; Comment,” *Michigan Law Review*, 30 (1) Nov. 1931, pp. 7-37.

the law applied equally to all citizens, Woodcock prosecuted all violators; from the small scale farmer-bootleggers, to the U.S. Congressman from Maryland, John Philip Hill (who was ultimately acquitted).<sup>83</sup>

In addition to enforcing Prohibition, Woodcock was often called upon to defend the actions of Prohibition agents. A common complaint against federal prohibition agents was their “too free use of firearms” and in fact, almost one hundred people had been killed (and at least 75 injured) by agents in the first six years of Prohibition, in addition to the deaths of 45 agents, and injury of 75 others.<sup>84</sup> On three occasions Woodcock was called upon to defend agents accused of murder in the deaths of presumed bootleggers in Maryland.<sup>85</sup> In each case, Woodcock earned acquittals for the accused agents, and in the process gained a perspective on the inadequate training and pay that the agents received; problems he would rectify when he became the Director of the U.S. Prohibition Bureau in 1930.<sup>86</sup>

### **Prohibition**

“Has the individual any rights which organized government, in order to promote the general welfare, may not take away?”

Amos W.W. Woodcock quoted in “New Dry Chief Faces a Difficult Task,” *New York Times*, June 29, 1930, p.50.

Considering his background in (and strict adherence to) the law, military discipline, and Methodism, Woodcock may have been the perfect choice to enforce

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<sup>83</sup> “Indictment of Hill Sought in Baltimore,” *Washington Post*, Oct. 4, 1923, p. 1; “United States vs. Hill,” <http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/form/academic>; “Not Guilty,” *Time Magazine*, Nov. 24, 1924.

<sup>84</sup> Schmeckebier, *The Bureau of Prohibition*, 53.

<sup>85</sup> “Prohibition Group Cleared of Murder in Baltimore Trial,” *Washington Post*, March 6, 1927, p.19; “Dry Agent Cleared by Jury in Killing of Farmer in Raid,” *Washington Post*, Feb. 18, 1928, p. 1; “Woodcock Accepts Post as Prohibition Enforcement Chief,” *Baltimore Sun*, June 24, 1930, p. 1-2.

<sup>86</sup> Woodcock was involved in many legal cases as U.S. Attorney; in the Wicomico Historical Society Collection at the Edward H. Nabb Research Center for Delmarva History & Culture at Salisbury University, MD there are two scrapbooks with hundreds of newspaper clippings from the 1920s reporting on these cases. These were presumably collected by his sister Elizabeth, but unfortunately, few of the clippings provide a citation.



Prohibition. In keeping with the early 20<sup>th</sup> century tendency to “oppose national decline with various moral crusades” in hopes of achieving “rational control of society,”<sup>87</sup> Woodcock clearly believed that the state had the authority to take away an individual’s rights for the betterment of society. This brand of “social-control progressivism”<sup>88</sup> was exemplified by President Herbert Hoover, who appointed Woodcock to serve as the director of the federal Bureau of Prohibition in 1930. Despite its general unpopularity, Woodcock was determined to enforce the law to the best of his ability, and his assumption of the directorship marked a transition from apathetic to zealous enforcement. In his later years Woodcock looked back on his life of service and commented that, “My reputation as a dry seemed to eclipse everything else I did.”<sup>89</sup> This apparent lamentation expressed Woodcock’s frustration that despite his best efforts he was hamstrung by uncooperative state enforcement and judicial systems, and that he was more remembered for his role in the failed Prohibition than any of his other contributions.

During the 1920s enforcement of Prohibition was under the jurisdiction of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), which was a part of the Treasury Department. The prohibition agents, often referred to as “revenueurs,” were not required to pass civil service exams, received little training, and were often guilty of corruption and civil rights violations. By 1926, seven hundred and fifty-two agents had been dismissed; one hundred forty-one of whom had been convicted of crimes. Public outcry against Prohibition and the modes of enforcement continued, and in 1927 the federal government reorganized its efforts; instituting civil service exams for potential agents and appointing

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<sup>87</sup> T.H.E. Travers, “Technology, Tactics, and Morale: Jean de Bloch, the Boer War, and British Military Theory, 1900-1914,” *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 51, No. 2 (June 1979), 264-286.

<sup>88</sup> Joan Hoff Wilson, *Herbert Hoover: Forgotten Progressive*, (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1975), 39.

<sup>89</sup> “Amos W.W. Woodcock, Soldier and Prosecutor,” *Washington Post*, Jan. 18, 1964, p. B2; “Gen. Woodcock, War Hero and Volstead Sleuth,” *Washington Post*, Jan. 19, 1964, p. B11.

Dr. James Doran as the new Prohibition Commissioner.<sup>90</sup>

When Herbert Hoover was elected president in the fall of 1928 he initiated a thorough overhaul of the federal criminal justice system. In response to complaints about the heavy-handed enforcement policies of the past (various groups claimed that somewhere between 200 and 1500 prohibition agents and private citizens had been killed in the first ten years of Prohibition)<sup>91</sup>, Hoover appointed an eleven-man commission under the direction of George W. Wickersham to look into all aspects of crime and law enforcement, but particularly Prohibition and its enforcement. The commission was officially known as The National Commission on Law Observance and Enforcement, but is generally known as the Wickersham Commission. The reports of the commission verified the well-known fact that Prohibition was being ignored by many Americans, and also revealed the widespread corruption and abuse by prohibition agents and police. Whereas many people thought the results of the Commission's investigation supported the need to repeal the Eighteenth Amendment, the Commission instead recommended that enforcement be stepped up and the law be more strictly enforced; though it also recommended better training for agents and police, and called for an end to corruption and use of the 'third degree.'<sup>92</sup>

Even before the Wickersham Commission's reports were completed (the

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<sup>90</sup> Walter F. Murphy, *Wiretapping on Trial: a case study in the judicial process* (New York: Random House, 1965); Richard M. Abrams, *The Burden of Progress* (Glenview, IL: Scott Foresman and Co., 1978), 146.

<sup>91</sup> Andrew Sinclair, *Prohibition: The Era of Excess* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1962), 188; Clifford James Walker, *One Eye Closed, The Other Red: the California Bootleg Years* (Barstow, CA: Back Door Publishing, 1999), 483.

<sup>92</sup> The 'third degree' was "...the employment of methods which inflict suffering, physical or mental, upon a person in order to obtain information about a crime." Such methods included physical brutality, protracted questioning, threats and methods of intimidation, lack of sleep, and refusal to allow access to legal counsel. *Report on Lawlessness in Law Enforcement*, National Commission on Law Observance and Enforcement, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1931).

preliminary report was completed in October 1929, and released by Hoover to the public in January 1930),<sup>93</sup> Hoover had decided to move prohibition enforcement from the Treasury Department to the Department of Justice. He had announced his intention to make this change in his inaugural speech in March 1929, and it was one of the first recommendations of the Wickersham Commission's report.<sup>94</sup> Hoover formed the new Bureau of Prohibition under the Department of Justice, and the title for its chief was Director of Prohibition. Hoover then went looking for a new person to serve as Director; someone who would lead and reinvigorate the prohibition effort.

Woodcock had worked with the Wickersham Commission from 1929-1930, "making a study of the enforcement of Federal and State Prohibition laws."<sup>95</sup> He had apparently made a favorable impression on Chairman Wickersham, and among the papers in the Hoover Presidential Library is a memo stating that "...Mr. Wickersham suggests that Amos W.W. Woodcock be relieved of his duties as U.S. Attorney in Baltimore to take over the job [as Director of Prohibition]." Wickersham's suggestion was apparently received favorably; Woodcock was appointed as the first Director of Prohibition, and began his duties on July 1, 1930.<sup>96</sup>

Strickland Gillilan of the Washington Post suggested a more humorous reason for the transfer of prohibition enforcement from the Treasury Department to the Department

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<sup>93</sup> James D. Calder, *The Origins and Development of Federal Crime Control Policy: Herbert Hoover's Initiatives* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1993), 100-101; "Proposals to Improve Enforcement of Criminal Law of the United States," Hoover's Message to Congress, January 13, 1930 in *The State Papers and Other Public Writings of Herbert Hoover* (William Starr Myers, ed.) vol. 1 (New York: Doubleday, Doran and Co.), 1070.

<sup>94</sup> "Prohibition Control Switched," *The Literary Digest*, vol. 105, May 31, 1930, p. 8; Hoover, Herbert C. Inaugural Address, March 4, 1929 <http://odur.let.rug.nl/~usa/P/hh31/speeches/hover.htm>

<sup>95</sup> "Colonel Woodcock, Our New Dry Czar," *The Literary Digest*, vol. 106, (July 12, 1930), p. 8; Albert E. Sawyer, "Report on the Enforcement of the Prohibition Laws of the United States," *Michigan Law Review*, vol. 30, no. 1, (Nov. 1931), 7-37.

<sup>96</sup> "Woodcock Accepts Post as Prohibition Enforcement Chief," *Baltimore Sun*, June 24, 1930, p. 1-2; "New Test for Prohibition," *New York Times*, July 13, 1930, p. 7-8; "Woodcock Orders Dry Drive Centered on Big Violators," *New York Times*, July 31, 1930, p. 1.

of Justice. He opined that it was to avoid the combination of Secretary of the Treasury Andrew Mellon and Director of Prohibition Amos Woodcock, who would surely be referred to as “Amos and Andy.”<sup>97</sup>

Woodcock was an unlikely choice in many ways. First of all he came from Maryland, which as of 1930 was the only state that had not enacted a law to enforce the national prohibition against alcohol. Governor Albert C. Ritchie (whom Woodcock later described as his “friendly enemy”<sup>98</sup>) was a well-known “wet” who believed that the state was “under no duty to help relieve the Federal government of the burdens and cost” of enforcing the Volstead Act.<sup>99</sup> Residents of Maryland had largely ignored Prohibition, and the state was referred to as “sopping Maryland;” Baltimore as “wringing wet;” and Maryland’s nickname of “Free State” had been earned as a result of its opposition to Prohibition.<sup>100</sup> Even Woodcock’s hometown of Salisbury was decidedly in favor of the repeal of Prohibition.<sup>101</sup>

Many magazines and newspapers of the day printed articles that introduced Woodcock to the American public, and although many of these articles described Woodcock favorably they also expressed little confidence in the likelihood of his success in what was considered by some to be “the most difficult job under the government”<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> “Washington Wash,” *Washington Post*, Aug. 31, 1930, p. 4.

<sup>98</sup> “Memories of St. John’s College,” Amos W.W. Woodcock, *Evening Capital* (Annapolis), June 29, 1949, p. 7.

<sup>99</sup> “Ritchie and State Prohibition Enforcement,” transcript of a speech by Gov. Albert C. Ritchie, published by the Ritchie Citizenship League, 1929, p. 15; “From a Senator’s Diary,” *Washington Post*, July 6, 1930, p. M9.

<sup>100</sup> Irving Fisher, *The “Noble Experiment”* (NY: Alcohol Information Committee, 1930), 302-304; “New Dry Chief Faces a Difficult Task,” *New York Times*, June 29, 1930, p.50; “Marylanders Recall Day That Prohibition Ended,” *Salisbury Times*, Dec. 5, 1963, p. 30.

<sup>101</sup> “Prohibition Poll Shows City ‘Wet’,” *Salisbury Times*, July 1, 1930, p. 1.

<sup>102</sup> “New Dry Chief Faces a Difficult Task,” *New York Times*, June 29, 1930, p.50.

and “not only thankless but downright impossible.”<sup>103</sup> Woodcock was described as being “personally dry, but by no means a fanatic on the subject of Prohibition,”<sup>104</sup> and Woodcock himself went out of his way to state that he had not sought the position of Director, and would have preferred to remain in Baltimore as U.S. Attorney.<sup>105</sup> Woodcock was praised for the fairness and efficiency he had shown in the prosecution of prohibition violators as U.S. Attorney for Maryland (in which 8,000 of 11,000 violators were convicted). In one year Woodcock and his staff had prosecuted about 1500 cases, whereas his predecessor had prosecuted only one.<sup>106</sup>

As expected for such a controversial post, Woodcock received both praise and criticism for his efforts. He was commended for his readiness to “listen to both sides of a question...”<sup>107</sup> while at the same time being “vigorous and fearless in prosecution of offenders.”<sup>108</sup> One reporter was obviously impressed, describing Woodcock’s personality as “so winning, so persuasive, so manifestly honest and honorable...” and going so far as noting several similarities between Woodcock and Abraham Lincoln.<sup>109</sup> But not all journalists were as complimentary about Woodcock or his mission. He was derided as being “the most naïve and unsuspecting official at the Capital...” and as having a “...friendly smile, but hardly a trace of humor.”<sup>110</sup> At the very least, his acceptance of this new position was considered to be the kiss of death for any future

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<sup>103</sup> “He Got the Job,” *Outlook and Independent*, vol. 155 (July 9, 1930), 374-375.

<sup>104</sup> “The Man Who Becomes the Nation’s Dry Chief,” *Salisbury Times*, June 24, 1930, p.1.

<sup>105</sup> Amos W.W. Woodcock, “The Problem of Prohibition,” *Current History*, vol. 34, pp. 7-11 (April 1931); “Onetime Prohibition Head Recalls Days of Speakeasy” *Salisbury Times*, Dec. 5, 1963, p. 1.

<sup>106</sup> “Colonel Woodcock, Our New Dry Czar,” *Literary Digest*, vol. 106, (July 12, 1930), p. 8; “Woodcock to Quit Dry Post in Fall,” *Washington Post*, July 8, 1932, p. 9.

<sup>107</sup> “New Dry Chief Faces a Difficult Task,” *New York Times*, June 29, 1930, p.50.

<sup>108</sup> “Mr. Woodcock’s Promotion,” *Baltimore Sun*, June 25, 1930, p. 12; “Woodcock Chosen Dry Bureau’s Head,” *Washington Post*, June 24, 1930, p. 2.

<sup>109</sup> “New Prohibition Head Big Small Town Man,” *Washington Post*, June 29, 1930, p. M11.

<sup>110</sup> “Backstage in Washington” *Outlook and Independent*, vol. 156 (Dec. 3, 1930), p. 531; “Mr. Woodcock Sees America” *Outlook and Independent*, vol. 158, (July 22, 1931), 363.

political aspirations he may have had.<sup>111</sup>

Despite his apparent reticence in accepting his new role, Woodcock immersed himself in his duties; the *Literary Digest* going so far as to comment that “His hobby seems to be work...”<sup>112</sup> A summer heat wave hit Washington during Woodcock’s first month on the job, and with the temperature soaring to 103°, “Practically all government departments suspended business for the afternoon.” Despite the heat, “the office of Col. Amos Woodcock, prohibition director, was kept open with a complete staff until 4:30 o’clock.”<sup>113</sup>

One of Woodcock’s first actions was to present to the American public his philosophy regarding Prohibition and his strategy for its enforcement. Within months of his appointment, the Department of Justice published a small booklet titled “The Value of Law Observance” with Woodcock’s name prominently displayed. Harkening back to Hoover’s inaugural address, Woodcock placed a heavy emphasis on the duty of citizens to obey the law. If citizens did not like the law they should work for its repeal, but in the meantime it was their duty as citizens to obey the law, and the federal government would proceed with its “vigorous enforcement.”<sup>114</sup>

Woodcock tried to bolster the moral case for abstention with scientific support, so in addition to its appeal for law observance the booklet presented tables of data on alcohol consumption and alcohol-related deaths in the United States. The text describes the data as showing that prior to 1920 the consumption of alcohol was “increasing rapidly” and that there was a “marked increase” in alcohol-related deaths and cirrhosis of

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<sup>111</sup> “From a Senator’s Diary,” *Washington Post*, July 6, 1930, p. M9.

<sup>112</sup> “Colonel Woodcock, Our New Dry Czar,” *Literary Digest*, vol. 106, (July 12, 1930), 8.

<sup>113</sup> “Break in Heat Predicted for Capital Today,” *Washington Post*, July 22, 1930, p. 1,3.

<sup>114</sup> Hoover, Herbert C. Inaugural Address, March 4, 1929; “The Value of Law Observance”, Department of Justice, 1930. (Reprinted by the University Press of the Pacific, Honolulu, Hawaii, 2003).

the liver in the U.S.; but such a trend is not obvious from the actual data. The data actually show that alcohol-related deaths and cirrhosis were *decreasing* in the period from 1913 to 1920, and that there was an increase in alcohol-related deaths and cirrhosis from 1921 to 1928. In this case, Woodcock seems to have let his enthusiasm for Prohibition override his ‘scientific’ interpretation of the data.<sup>115</sup> The booklet went on to explain how Prohibition was no different than other laws (such as those requiring vaccinations, regulating food safety, and outlawing gambling and prostitution) that protect the public welfare at the cost of some “personal liberty.” Ultimately, “the price paid for the advantages of the community of living is the immediate loss of perfect and full personal liberty.”<sup>116</sup>

On August 4, 1930 Woodcock made a broadcast from Washington, D.C. over the NBC radio network. In this address Woodcock repeated his promise to enforce the law “fairly, honestly, earnestly, and lawfully.” He also outlined his plans to improve the selection and training of Prohibition agents, his intention to collect data relevant to the ultimate goal of decreasing alcohol consumption, and to encourage state agencies to help with the enforcement of Prohibition.<sup>117</sup>

In keeping with the Hoover Administration’s penchant for “scientific” studies and the gathering of data prior to making policy decisions,<sup>118</sup> Woodcock embarked on a fact-finding tour of the United States to visit enforcement agents and learn about the problems they were facing. These wide-ranging “inspection trips” (as Woodcock called them) or

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<sup>115</sup> “The Value of Law Observance”, Department of Justice.

<sup>116</sup> “The Value of Law Observance”, Department of Justice, p. 42.

<sup>117</sup> “Our Plan to Enforce Prohibition” Transcript of a radio address by Director of Prohibition, Amos W.W. Woodcock, from the National Broadcasting Company, Washington, DC. August 4, 1930; “Woodcock Summons the Casual Drinkers to Help New Drive,” *New York Times*, Aug. 5, 1930, p. 1; “Woodcock Asks Aid of Citizens,” *Washington Post*, Aug. 5, 1930, p. 8.

<sup>118</sup> Joan Hoff Wilson, *Herbert Hoover: Forgotten Progressive*, p. 138; James D. Calder, *The Origins and Development of Federal Crime Control Policy*, 15.

“junkets” (as his critics called them)<sup>119</sup> took him to New England, the South, Wyoming, California, and even Hawaii (which was only a U.S. territory at the time, but was nevertheless subject to Prohibition). Woodcock, having been trained in statistics, was convinced that a “...scholarly, scientific study of the effects of national prohibition...” would be “...much more reliable than opinions formed upon partial observation or prejudice.”<sup>120</sup> Each Prohibition administrator was required to submit a daily report of their activities, and the data from these reports was summarized on graphs and charts to provide a day-to-day view of the campaign against alcohol.<sup>121</sup>

To improve the performance of federal agents Woodcock instituted a training program instructing agents in modes of surveillance and the rules of legal search. It was hoped that this training would not only avoid violations of citizens’ rights to privacy, but would also result in prosecutions that would hold up in court.<sup>122</sup> At least one political humorist mocked the training scheme (and the futility of Prohibition) in a brief editorial; “Amos Woodcock is out after young and intelligent dry agents. Why doesn’t he try college boys? They know where to find the liquor.”<sup>123</sup> Another made tongue-in-cheek complaints that Woodcock was trying to make the Prohibition agents into a bunch of “polite and well-mannered boys” when their natural tendency was to “wield hatchets and axes and cut up the furniture and trample all over the place.”<sup>124</sup> Still others doubted that Woodcock would be able to reform a system, and its agents, that had been developed

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<sup>119</sup> John S. Gregory, “Mr. Woodcock Sees America,” *Outlook and Independent*, vol. 158, no. 12 (July 22, 1931), 363.

<sup>120</sup> Amos W.W. Woodcock, “The Problem of Prohibition,” *Current History*, vol. 34 (April 1931), 7-11.

<sup>121</sup> “New Prohibition Policy,” *Washington Post*, July 10, 1930, p. 6.

<sup>122</sup> “Dry Agent College Opens This Mornin (sic),” *Washington Post*, Sept. 2, 1930, p. 2; “School for Sleuths,” *Time*, Sept. 8, 1930.

<sup>123</sup> Editorial – No Title, *Washington Post*, May 11, 1931, p. 6.

<sup>124</sup> “The Listening Post,” *Washington Post*, Jan. 24, 1931, p. 3.



over the years by a group of “...ignorant and venal men...”<sup>125</sup>

After only one year on the job Woodcock had brought about several important changes in the prohibition effort. On July 7, 1931 he made a 15-minute radio broadcast on the CBS radio network to describe these achievements to the American public.<sup>126</sup> Woodcock proudly reported that of the 58,173 cases prosecuted in Federal Courts, 58,173 had been ‘terminated,’ resulting in 50,334 convictions. In the process, 21,321 stills were destroyed and \$5,497,566.40 collected in fines. New agents were being selected based upon “intelligence and character,” and were being trained in the techniques of investigation and the laws of evidence, with an emphasis on “brains and not brawn.” A sense of professionalism and *esprit de corps* was developing among the agents, and “complaints of bad conduct upon the part of the agents have almost ceased.”<sup>127</sup>

In the radio broadcast Woodcock reiterated his intention to focus the Bureau’s efforts on the “commercial violator” and to “leave the purely private violator to his own conscience...” Despite the fact that private consumption of alcohol was illegal, and that it was ultimately responsible for creating the market in illegal liquor, Woodcock also respected the individual’s right to privacy guaranteed by law.

Woodcock’s academic, military, and religious background undoubtedly played a role in shaping his approach to the enforcement of Prohibition. He believed that educating the public about the dangers of alcohol, and of the need for obeying the law, would help bring about compliance. He formed a committee (the Bureau of Prohibition

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<sup>125</sup> “Woodcock’s Tough Job,” *Washington Post*, Sept. 6, 1930, p. 6.

<sup>126</sup> “The First Year of the Bureau of Prohibition Under the Department of Justice” Transcript of a radio address by Director of Prohibition, Amos W.W. Woodcock, from the Columbia Broadcasting System, Washington, DC. July 7, 1931.

<sup>127</sup> Although Woodcock resisted several attempts by politicians to have their cronies installed as Prohibition administrators, Woodcock was willing to bend the rules and retain “agents of long standing, who, for some technical reason could not pass the former Civil Service examination.” Memo from AWWW to Walter H. Newton, Secretary to President Hoover, Sept. 27, 1930.

Advisory Research Council) of educators to develop a program by which graduate students would be encouraged to address questions regarding Prohibition in their graduate work.<sup>128</sup> Woodcock's newly reorganized Prohibition Bureau was referred to as being "almost a military organization..."<sup>129</sup> He modeled the schools for Prohibition agents on those set up by General Pershing for training officers during World War One<sup>130</sup> (Woodcock himself had attended one of these training schools in France), and he instituted a system of promotions for Prohibition agents that was similar to the one used for regular army officers. Beyond the purely legal issues involved, Woodcock's strict Methodist background reinforced his belief that alcohol consumption was harmful, and he praised the "rare depth of spirituality in the prohibition movement..." that was accepted as "a matter of faith among millions today."<sup>131</sup>

One of the most contentious issues regarding the enforcement of Prohibition was the use of wiretapping to catch bootleggers. Wiretapping, which involved secretly listening to suspects' telephone conversations, had long been considered "ungentlemanly," and had been outlawed by Congress during World War One despite its obvious usefulness in prosecuting spies. Despite the fact that wiretapping was against federal policy it was sometimes used to catch criminals. This contradiction between policy and practice came to a head in 1925 when a Seattle bootlegger named Roy Olmstead was arrested along with his wife and numerous associates on charges of smuggling liquor from Canada. The evidence against the "Olmstead Gang" included transcripts of conversations that federal agents had obtained by wiretapping Olmstead's

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<sup>128</sup> "Aid of Education Leaders Asked in Prohibition Study," *Washington Post*, May 11, 1931, p. 1

<sup>129</sup> "Woodcock's War," *Time*, Aug. 11, 1930.

<sup>130</sup> "Woodcock Starts Dry Offensive on July 1," *Washington Post*, April 5, 1931, p. M1.

<sup>131</sup> Amos W.W. Woodcock,, "The Problem of Prohibition," *Current History*, vol. 34 (April 1931), 7-11.

telephone. Despite claims by defense attorneys that the wiretap evidence was obtained in violation of federal policy and the Fourth Amendment's protection of the right to privacy, the U.S. District Judge in Seattle refused to suppress the wiretap evidence, and Olmstead and his associates were ultimately found guilty of violating the Volstead Act. Appeals brought the case all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court in which former president (and strong supporter of Prohibition) William Howard Taft was serving as Chief Justice. In June 1928 the Court upheld Olmstead's conviction in a 5-4 vote, with Taft writing the majority opinion and Louis Brandeis writing for the dissenters.

Now that the Supreme Court had approved the use of wiretapping evidence, the door was open for federal agencies to make wider use of it in criminal investigations, despite the fact that it had previously been against their policies to do so. In an appearance before Congress five months after he was appointed the new Director of Prohibition, Woodcock expressed his belief that wiretapping was legal and that he intended to continue using wiretaps to catch bootleggers. During Woodcock's Congressional appearance he displayed a rare sense of humor; when introduced to "wet" Representative George H. Tinkham of Massachusetts (who also happened to be a big-game hunter), Woodcock joked that Tinkham "ought not to waste his time hunting a woodcock."<sup>132</sup> It turned out that Tinkham was wasting his time, and his continued efforts to cut funding for wiretapping were defeated. To clear up any lingering confusion regarding the admissibility of wiretap evidence, U.S. Attorney General William Mitchell issued an order in 1930 that authorized the use of wiretapping only after the bureau chief and the assistant attorney general in charge of the investigation had granted

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<sup>132</sup> "From a Senator's Diary," *Washington Post*, Dec. 14, 1930, p. M21.

permission.<sup>133</sup> Somewhat surprisingly (given his later reputation for overzealous prosecution) J. Edgar Hoover's Bureau of Investigation (renamed the Federal Bureau of Investigation, FBI, in 1935) continued to consider the use of wiretapping as "unethical" and seldom allowed its agents to use it.

It wasn't Congressional pressure, but public attitude that eventually brought an end to Prohibition, and Woodcock's career as "dry czar." In the election of 1932, Democrat Franklin Delano Roosevelt's platform included a promise to repeal Prohibition and this (along with discontent over the continual worsening of the Great Depression) helped him capture 57% of the popular vote to Hoover's 40%. Even before FDR took office, Congress passed the Twenty-first amendment that repealed Prohibition, and it was ratified by two-thirds of the states on December 5, 1933. Prohibition was over, and Amos W.W. Woodcock was out of the job he had never really wanted, but had done his best to perform. Although Prohibition did not officially end until December 5, 1933, Woodcock's term as Director ended on April 1, 1933 when FDR began his first term as president.<sup>134</sup> Though he was widely praised for his rational and efficient enforcement of Prohibition, the *Baltimore Sun* could not resist expressing its satisfaction that Woodcock's resignation "relieves Maryland of the embarrassment of having one of her citizens acting as the chief of the spies, snoopers, and *agents provocateurs* of Volsteadism."<sup>135</sup>

As a prominent 'dry' from Maryland it was almost inevitable that Woodcock would have run afoul of H.L. Mencken, "the prolific Baltimore Sun columnist and

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<sup>133</sup> Murphy, *Wiretapping on Trial*, 128-130.

<sup>134</sup> "Gen. Amos Woodcock Dies at 80 On Shore," *Baltimore Sun*, January 17, 1964, p. B24.

<sup>135</sup> "Amos Is Free Again!"

uncompromising scourge of other people's prejudices,"<sup>136</sup> who was the "foremost spokesman" in the war against Prohibition.<sup>137</sup> To be sure, Woodcock was everything that Mencken was not. Whereas Woodcock was dapper and reserved, a strict Methodist who possessed a high sense of moral conduct, Mencken was a loud and combative curmudgeon, an agnostic with a taste for beer and cigars.<sup>138</sup> Additionally, Mencken had written a blistering editorial against the people of the Eastern Shore, and Woodcock's hometown of Salisbury in particular, following the lynching of Matthew Williams in December 1931. Mencken referred to Salisburians as "poor white trash" and "brutish imbeciles" with "ignorant and ignoble minds."<sup>139</sup> However, it's not hard to imagine that Woodcock may have partially agreed with Mencken's characterization of the intellectual and moral character of the Eastern Shore.

Contrary to what might be expected, Woodcock and Mencken actually got along quite well. Upon the termination of Woodcock's role as Director of Prohibition (which Mencken had referred to as "the most august and puissant post in the government")<sup>140</sup> the two men met to discuss Prohibition and other areas of common interest. The meeting was initiated by Woodcock, who planned to write a book about his experiences as Director of Prohibition, and was seeking Mencken's advice. Woodcock had a letter of introduction to Mencken from Raymond S. Tompkins, who had been a war correspondent for the *Baltimore Sun* during World War One, and had spent his time covering the

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<sup>136</sup> Edward Behr, *Prohibition: Thirteen Years that Changed America*, (New York, Arcade Publishing, 1996), 238.

<sup>137</sup> Marion Elizabeth Rodgers, *Mencken: The American Iconoclast*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 214.

<sup>138</sup> Rodgers, *Mencken*, 45, 126-127, 159, 362.

<sup>139</sup> H.L. Mencken, "The Eastern Shore Kultur," *Baltimore Evening Sun*, Dec. 7, 1931.

<sup>140</sup> H.L. Mencken, "Another Martyr to Service," *Baltimore Evening Sun*, June 30, 1930.

activities of Maryland soldiers in France.<sup>141</sup> Mencken invited Woodcock to join him and Mrs. Mencken for lunch.<sup>142</sup> They met on July 10, 1933 and Mencken recorded the visit in his diary, describing Woodcock as a “small, neat, smooth-shaven, baldheaded fellow.” During the meeting (according to Mencken), Woodcock expressed his belief that Prohibition would be repealed, his frustration that Hoover had been unwilling to modify the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment as Woodcock had recommended, and that Woodcock did not like Herbert Hoover.<sup>143</sup> Just six weeks after their meeting Woodcock mailed Mencken two chapters of his nascent book, asking for Mencken’s opinion. Woodcock apparently already had a commitment from Alfred A. Knopf to publish the book,<sup>144</sup> and Mencken may have even assisted Woodcock in obtaining the backing of Alfred A. Knopf; the two of them were old friends and Knopf published the magazine *American Mercury* of which Mencken was both co-founder and editor.

Woodcock’s book on Prohibition never came to fruition, but years later Mencken resurrected their correspondence when he was writing a history of the University of Maryland, and sought Woodcock’s help in understanding the relationship between St. John’s College and the University of Maryland.<sup>145</sup> Interestingly, this correspondence took place exactly at the time of Woodcock’s resignation as President of St. John’s, and Mencken quickly sent Woodcock a note in which he apologized for troubling him at this

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<sup>141</sup> Raymond S. Tompkins, *Maryland Fighters in the Great War*, (Baltimore: Thomas & Evans Printing Co., 1919).

<sup>142</sup> Letter from Raymond S. Tompkins to H.L. Mencken, June 6, 1933; Letter from Amos W.W. Woodcock to H.L. Mencken, June 7, 1933; Telegram from Amos W.W. Woodcock to H.L. Mencken, June 9, 1933. (Correspondence between Woodcock and Mencken is from the Enoch Pratt Free Library, Baltimore, MD).

<sup>143</sup> Charles A. Fecher, ed., *The Diary of H.L. Mencken*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989), 58-59.

<sup>144</sup> Letter from Amos W.W. Woodcock to H.L. Mencken, June 17, 1933 ; Letter from Amos W.W. Woodcock to H.L. Mencken, June 28, 1933; Letter from Amos W.W. Woodcock to H.L. Mencken, July 5, 1933.

<sup>145</sup> Letter from H.L. Mencken to Amos W.W. Woodcock , May 10, 1937; Letter from Amos W.W. Woodcock to H.L. Mencken, May 11, 1937.

time, and expressed his opinion that the difficulties at St. John's were a result of its being located so close to the larger schools of Johns Hopkins and the University of Maryland. He also expressed his hope that Woodcock would visit him again the next time he was in Baltimore.<sup>146</sup>

Woodcock and Mencken shared a strong sense of fairness, and though they both might be considered narrow-minded, they were objective in their judgment of people and events. In 1939 Mencken wrote an editorial in which he expressed his admiration for Japan's military prowess in its expansion into China. Mencken decried the anti-Japanese "propaganda" that had been written by the American and British press, and expressed his view that Japan had as much right to "clean up China, as the United States ever had to clean up Cuba."<sup>147</sup> Presumably this editorial was written before knowledge of the Japanese atrocities in Nanking (which occurred in Dec. 1937-February 1938) was well-known in the west. Woodcock, then on military maneuvers at the old Bull Run battlefield in Virginia, wrote to Mencken to express his "complete approval" of Mencken's editorial. Woodcock expressed his own surprise regarding the negative perception of the Japanese by America, and his belief that it was a result of British propaganda. Mencken replied to say that although he doubted the editorial would change Americans' perceptions, he was pleased to have his protest "supported by men like you."<sup>148</sup>

### **Special Assistant to the U.S. Attorney General**

Even though he was no longer the Director of Prohibition, Woodcock was not

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<sup>146</sup> Letter from H.L. Mencken to Amos W.W. Woodcock, May 12, 1937.

<sup>147</sup> H.L. Mencken, "A Word for the Japs," *Baltimore Sun*, Aug. 13, 1939.

<sup>148</sup> Letter from Amos W.W. Woodcock to H.L. Mencken, August 13, 1939; Letter from H.L. Mencken to Amos W.W. Woodcock, August 21, 1939.

finished with federal service; on April 1, 1933 he was appointed as Special Assistant to the Attorney General of the United States (Homer S. Cummings was the new Attorney General in the FDR administration), and thereby became a member of Roosevelt's "Little Cabinet."<sup>149</sup> In this position (which he would hold until 1945) Woodcock was called upon to represent the United States in a variety of specialized legal cases, several of which he prosecuted while he was also serving as the president of St. John's College (1934-1937).

In late 1933 Woodcock travelled to Texas to prosecute several individuals who were engaged in fraudulent investment schemes. Oil companies such as the "General Minerals Company" and the "Big Indian Oil Company" were using the mail to defraud investors by claiming that they had discovered vast quantities of oil in various locations in Texas. Woodcock obtained convictions against several of these individuals.<sup>150</sup> While in the southwest Woodcock was asked to help resolve the case of a Mexican citizen who had escaped to Mexico after jumping bail in Texas, and was then "kidnapped" and brought back to the U.S. by a Texas policeman and a U.S. Marshall. The Mexican government wanted to extradite the Americans to face kidnapping charges in Mexico. In 1935 Secretary of State Cordell Hull intervened, and both the Mexican and the Texans were released from U.S. jails, and a bill of \$1061.48 was sent to the Mexican government for costs. The residents of Laredo were not happy about what they perceived as Woodcock's efforts to help the Mexicans against Texas lawmen, but Woodcock was happy to report to U.S. Assistant Attorney General George B. Keenan that it was "the

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<sup>149</sup> "Woodcock Out as Dry Chief; Gets New Post," *Baltimore Sun*, April 1, 1933, p. 1; "Woodcock is Appointed to Little Cabinet," *Salisbury Times*, April 1, 1933, p. 1.

<sup>150</sup> National Archives, College Park, MD.; Box 9208, file 36-73-76.



most interesting case in which I have been concerned.”<sup>151</sup>

Among other notable cases that Woodcock prosecuted were federal tax evasion charges against several of Huey Long’s associates;<sup>152</sup> the prosecution of Kentucky coal mining companies, their owners, and local sheriff’s deputies on charges of conspiring to stop pro-union activities in the coalfields;<sup>153</sup> and several contractors accused of overcharging the government for construction projects.<sup>154</sup>

A case that Woodcock would later remember as another of the most interesting was the prosecution of Pedro Albizu Campos, the leader of the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party, which was seeking the independence of Puerto Rico from the United States.<sup>155</sup> In October 1935 four Nationalists were killed by police during a protest (an incident later known as the Rio Piedras Massacre). In response to Albizu’s call for revenge the chief of the insular police (Col. E. Francis Riggs, a retired U.S. Army officer) was assassinated by two Nationalists, who were subsequently arrested and summarily executed by the police. Albizu was arrested and charged along with seven other Nationalists with “attempting to overthrow the U.S. government by force, fomenting violence, and trying to recruit an army of independence.” Woodcock helped prosecute this case, in which Albizu was found guilty, and sentenced to ten years in prison.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> National Archives, College Park, MD.; Box 14037, file 95-100-97.

<sup>152</sup> “Col. Woodcock to Prosecute Aids of Long,” *Washington Post*, July 27, 1935, p.4; “Shushan to Trial,” *Time Magazine*, Oct. 21, 1935.

<sup>153</sup> “Civil Rights Act Invoked to End Mine Terrorism,” *Washington Post*, Sept. 22, 1937, p. 6; “24 Mine Executives, 23 Deputies Indicted As Harlan Terrorists,” *Washington Post*, Sept. 28, 1935, p. 1.

<sup>154</sup> “Camp Meade Case Hearing Begun,” *Washington Post*, July 12, 1934, p.5; “Ex-Prohibition Chief to Retire,” *New York Times*, May 29, 1945, p. 16.

<sup>155</sup> “Puerto Ricans Wait Trial of 8 in Revolt Plot,” *Washington Post*, July 13, 1936, p. 3; “Gen. Woodcock to Prosecute Jap Leaders,” *Washington Post*, Dec. 2, 1945, p. M3.

<sup>156</sup> “Pistols, Rifles, Bullets,” *Time Magazine*, Aug. 10, 1936; Frederico Ribes Tovar, *Albizu Campos: Puerto Rican Revolutionary*, (New York: Plus Ultra Educational Pub., 1971), pp. 56-64.

## Back to St. John's College

“As the college did so much for me, I regret that I could do so little for it.”

“Memories of St. John's College”, Amos W.W. Woodcock, *Evening Capital* (Annapolis), July 11, 1949, p. 3.

In the summer of 1934, twenty-three years after leaving St. John's College, Woodcock was invited back to his *alma mater* to serve as its president. This presented Woodcock with a bit of a dilemma; on at least two occasions in the past Woodcock had been under consideration for appointment as a federal judge,<sup>157</sup> but in both cases he had been passed over. Finally in 1934 a seat opened in the First Judicial Circuit Court of Maryland, a jurisdiction that included the Eastern Shore. Although Woodcock had always hoped to serve as a judge, and he had “some vague ambition about being a candidate,”<sup>158</sup> he now felt that the opportunity to return to his beloved St. John's was more inviting than becoming a candidate for the judgeship, and he withdrew his candidacy.<sup>159</sup>

The College was happy with the return of such a distinguished alumnus, and Woodcock was described as “a man who is experienced in the science of education” and who “will not permit financial considerations to wrongly influence academic policy”<sup>160</sup> and the *Rat-Tat* expressed optimism for his presidency.<sup>161</sup> The reference to “financial considerations” was a veiled hint to the fact that the College was in serious financial

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<sup>157</sup> “Appointment of Judge Urged by Woodcock,” *Washington Post*, March 19, 1927, p. 4; “Member of Court to be Named Chief,” *Washington Post*, March 6, 1930, p. 1; “Salisbury New Chief of Enforcement,” *Salisbury Times*, June 24, 1930, p. 1, 4.

<sup>158</sup> “Memories of St. John's College,” Amos W.W. Woodcock, *Evening Capital* (Annapolis), June 28, 1949, p. 7.

<sup>159</sup> “Woodcock Holds Hat Ready to Hurl into Judgeship Ring,” *Washington Post*, July 11, 1934, p. 6; “Every Noble Life,” *Washington Post*, July 15, 1934, p. B4.

<sup>160</sup> *Rat-Tat*, 1934, p. 26.

<sup>161</sup> *Rat-Tat*, 1935, p. 11.

difficulty; in fact, it was an “insolvent institution.”<sup>162</sup> Just prior to the stock market crash of 1929 the Board of Visitors and Governors of the College had mortgaged some of St. John’s properties to invest in Annapolis real estate, anticipating a colonial renaissance in Annapolis (*à la* Williamsburg) that was being promoted by New York financier Francis P. Garvan. After Garvan lost much of his fortune in the Crash, the Annapolis renaissance failed to occur, and the College was unable to pay its expenses.<sup>163</sup> In order to make up this shortfall the College had invited men to join its Board of Visitors who (it was hoped) would make financial contributions to the College. Woodcock had been critical of this policy, and decried the fact that “the course was laid to bring into the college men who were believed to have money to the exclusion of those who really knew St. John’s.” Woodcock’s appointment as president was immediately followed by the resignation of Board members William Woodward and Sylvester W. Labrot. Woodward had been one of the College’s greatest benefactors, and had contributed one-third of the College’s entire endowment fund.<sup>164</sup> Although it is unclear whether the resignations were a direct result of Woodcock’s appointment, it seems likely that Woodward and Labrot were offended by Woodcock’s stated hopes of restoring St. John’s College and “...its traditions, its interests in scholarship, and character” rather than emphasizing “...endowments and fine buildings.”<sup>165</sup>

Unfortunately, the President’s Annual Reports from the time that Woodcock held this office have been lost, and few details are available regarding the events of his

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<sup>162</sup> “Memories of St. John’s College”, Amos W.W. Woodcock, *Evening Capital* (Annapolis), June 29, 1949, p. 9.

<sup>163</sup> J. Winfree Smith, *A Search for the Liberal College: The beginning of the St. John’s Program*. (Annapolis, MD: St. John’s College Press), 1983, pp. 5-6.

<sup>164</sup> “New St. John’s Chief Elected; 2 of Board Quit,” *Washington Post*, Feb. 19, 1934, p. 4; “New Presidents,” *Time Magazine*, March 5, 1934, p. 49.

<sup>165</sup> “A Novel Selection,” *Washington Post*, Feb. 19, 1934, p. 8.

presidency. Nevertheless, it seems that Woodcock's three years as president were characterized primarily by financial troubles and his efforts to maintain traditional standards of education and student behavior in the face of the increasing forces of "progressive education."<sup>166</sup>

Upon their arrival at St. John's, students were exhorted by President Woodcock to "study hard, be gentlemen, [and] not use liquor in any form."<sup>167</sup> One of Woodcock's first initiatives was to restore the weekly chapel services that had been suspended since his own days at the College, but he had to concede that attendance be voluntary.<sup>168</sup> Despite his hopes that four years at St. John's would not only serve to "train the mind and body but to make gentlemen and good citizens,"<sup>169</sup> Woodcock himself had to intervene on several occasions to curtail 'ungentlemanly behavior' among the students.<sup>170</sup> Nevertheless, during his presidency Woodcock came to the legal defense of a student who had been charged with robbery. Woodcock entered the rather creative plea of *dementia collegorum* ('insanity caused by being a college student'), and although the student was found guilty of drunkenness and carrying a concealed weapon, the case demonstrates Woodcock's allegiance to St. John's and his willingness to stretch his own sense of morality to protect its image and its students.<sup>171</sup>

In general however, Woodcock found the students perplexing. Many changes had taken place since Woodcock had been a student, and he was shocked by the new mores

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<sup>166</sup> Ellis W. Hawley, *The Great War and the Search for a Modern Order, a History of the American People and Their Institutions, 1917-1933*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979), pp. 142-144.

<sup>167</sup> "Soundoffs," *Time*, Oct. 5, 1936, p. 35.

<sup>168</sup> "Memories of St. John's College," Amos W.W. Woodcock, *Evening Capital* (Annapolis), June 29, 1949, p. 9.

<sup>169</sup> "Inauguration: Remarks of Colonel A.W.W. Woodcock, October 20, 1934," Maryland State Archives, MSA-SC 5698-7-87, Location: 3/47/7/22, p. 11. (copy on file at the Nabb Center, Salisbury University, Salisbury, MD)

<sup>170</sup> "At the Universities," *Time*, Oct. 29, 1934, p. 41.

<sup>171</sup> "College 'Dementia' Made Defense Plea," *New York Times*, May 22, 1936, p. 3.

that existed at the College, and it seemed to him as though “a new generation of students must have arisen in the land.” He was struck especially by their apparent “assurance and conceit,” and their tendency to “to dress more nearly in the garb of tramps than of gentleman.” The tranquil academic atmosphere of former times had been replaced by radios blaring from the dormitories, and dances were often accompanied by “alcohol induced gaiety” and “something that was called music – swing music.” Though he complained about the apathy and lack of discipline among the new generation of collegians, Woodcock was realistic enough to recognize that “student tastes had changed in the 25 years that had passed,” and that his own sense of decorum and morality was “in step with the first decade of the century – not the third.” Having spent many years as an army officer and a high-ranking federal administrator Woodcock had no doubt become used to people following his directives (if not his example), but the students were not so easily commanded. Woodcock apparently placed some of the blame for poor student performance on himself, imagining that things might have been different if he “had the power to lead them, or the magnetism to draw them toward the scholarly ideal.”<sup>172</sup>

In May of 1936 St. John’s lost its accreditation with the Association of Colleges and Preparatory Schools of the Mid-Eastern States (now the Middle States Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools) as a result of a review by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education.<sup>173</sup> Although the College’s continuing financial problems played an important role in the loss of accreditation, the immediate cause was

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<sup>172</sup> “Memories of St. John’s College”, Amos W.W. Woodcock, *Evening Capital* (Annapolis), June 29, 1949, p. 7; “Memories of St. John’s College”, Amos W.W. Woodcock, *Evening Capital* (Annapolis), July 1, 1949, p. 3; “Memories of St. John’s College”, Amos W.W. Woodcock, *Evening Capital* (Annapolis), July 5, 1949, p. 7; “Memories of St. John’s College”, Amos W.W. Woodcock, *Evening Capital* (Annapolis), July 8, 1949, p. 6.

<sup>173</sup> Letter to President Amos W.W. Woodcock from the Chairman of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education, May 23, 1936.

the turmoil caused by Woodcock's decision to award a degree to a student (Robert N. Sosman of Westfield, NJ)<sup>174</sup> whom the faculty had found unqualified for graduation.<sup>175</sup> After a visit to St. John's in February 1936 the Chairman of the Commission (Dr. Wilson Farrand) wrote a report that criticized the College's financial situation, its weak admissions standards, and "What seemed to me a most serious mistake, and what may be regarded as the culmination of a series of minor instances, occurred last June when a student who had failed badly in his final Comprehensive Examination in English, his major subject, and who by a practically unanimous vote of the Faculty was not granted his diploma was on the recommendation of the President, following this action of the Faculty, awarded his diploma by the Trustees." In this case, Woodcock's own sense of fairness ran counter to the rules of academia, and the Commission concluded that this action "was largely due to his lack of academic experience."<sup>176</sup> After discussing the situation with Woodcock, the report claims that Woodcock "said that he had made a mistake and that it would not occur again."<sup>177</sup> Nevertheless, a letter dated May 23, 1936 to Woodcock from the Chairman of the Commission states that the Commission "unanimously voted to strike the name of St. John's College from the accredited list" primarily as a result of the College's "precarious financial condition and the continued failure to enforce satisfactory standards of scholarship."<sup>178</sup>

In the spring of 1936 rumors began to circulate that Woodcock was under

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<sup>174</sup> "McLaren Denies Faculty Meant to Deny Degree," *Washington Post*, June 8, 1935, p. 18.

<sup>175</sup> "St. John's Revival," *Time*, July 19, 1937, p. 35-37; Smith, *A Search for the Liberal College*, p. 7; Charles A. Nelson, *Radical Visions: Stringfellow Barr, Scott Buchanan, and their efforts on behalf of education and politics in the Twentieth Century*. (Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey, 2001), 3; Emily A. Murphy, *A Complete and Generous Education: 300 Years of liberal arts – St. John's College, Annapolis*. (Annapolis, MD: St. John's College Press, 1996), 74; "Old College Taken Off Accredited List", *New York Times*, March 19, 1937, p. 17.

<sup>176</sup> Letter to Professor H.W. Tyler, (presumably Dr. Farrand), May 23, 1936.

<sup>177</sup> Report on St. John's College by Dr. Wilson Farrand, 1936.

<sup>178</sup> Letter to Amos W.W. Woodcock, from the Chairman (presumably Dr. Farrand), May 23, 1936.



Portrait of Amos W.W. Woodcock, taken ca. 1935. (Photograph from the 1936 edition of the St. John's College yearbook, *Rat-Tat*, p. 6).

pressure to resign.<sup>179</sup> Despite the ongoing troubles, students at the College continued to support President Woodcock, and they dedicated the 1936 edition of the *Rat-Tat* to “He Whom We Honor; Colonel Amos Walter Wright Woodcock; In Appreciation of Personal Integrity.”<sup>180</sup> Nevertheless, the loss of accreditation was a serious blow to St. John’s reputation, and several parents wrote angry letters to the College threatening to withdraw their sons from the school.

Pressure continued to mount, particularly in view of St. John’s continued financial difficulties. At a meeting of the Board of Visitors and Governors on July 13, 1936 the Chairman of the Executive Committee, Walter H. Buck, charged that “President Woodcock has, so far, made no serious effort to obtain funds for the College.”<sup>181</sup> On April 12, 1937 Woodcock met with the Board and made two recommendations; first, to make St. John’s a co-educational institution, and secondly to place at least three faculty members on the Board of Visitors and Governors. These seem like rather odd recommendations, but they came with Woodcock’s assertion that if the Board declined to accept them he would resign. In fact, Woodcock had been advised a week earlier that the Board was considering his termination and that perhaps he should resign. It seems likely that Woodcock proposed these recommendations, knowing they would be denied by the Board, as a dignified exit strategy.<sup>182</sup> The Board accepted his resignation, effective June

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<sup>179</sup> “Denies He Will Quit College,” *New York Times*, June 23, 1936, p. 28.

<sup>180</sup> *Rat-Tat*, 1936.

<sup>181</sup> Minutes of the Board of Visitors and Governors, St. John’s College, Annapolis, MD., July 13, 1936, Maryland State Archives.

<sup>182</sup> Minutes of the Board of Visitors and Governors, St. John’s College, Annapolis, MD., April 12, 1937, Maryland State Archives; Confidential report from Richard Cleveland to Wilson Farrand, April 24, 1937; “Memories of St. John’s College,” Amos W.W. Woodcock, *Evening Capital* (Annapolis), July 11, 1949, p. 3.



30, 1937,<sup>183</sup> but publicly announced that Woodcock's resignation had been requested by the Board as a result of his "repeated and prolonged absence from his duties at the college" rather than any disagreement over school policies.<sup>184</sup> His termination was a heavy emotional blow, and in his final commencement address Woodcock expressed his doubt that there was a "sadder person in all the world than he who speaks to you."<sup>185</sup>

Although Woodcock's term as president came after years of financial and academic decline at St. John's, Woodcock is often blamed for the entire period of failure and loss of accreditation. Francis Perkins Miller (the liberal Democratic politician from Virginia) is particularly harsh in his description of Woodcock's presidency. Miller was invited to join the St. John's Board of Visitors and Governors by his friend Richard F. Cleveland, and he recounts the "evil days" during which Woodcock was president. He accuses Woodcock of assuming "a role of unctuous piety" when appearing before the Board, and claims that "under Woodcock's benevolent rule, the college had become practically bankrupt." Miller claims it was he who pushed the Board to fire Woodcock (since, Miller claims, Woodcock had refused to resign). To further disparage Woodcock's character by making him sound like some sort of academic hobo, Miller claims that when they cleared out Woodcock's rooms in Brice Hall (which Miller incorrectly spells as "Bryce") they found that his furniture consisted of an army cot and a pile of empty tin cans.<sup>186</sup>

In the fall of 1937 Drs. Stringfellow Barr and Scott Buchanan were invited (again,

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<sup>183</sup> "Woodcock Out June 30" *New York Times*, May 12, 1937, p. 25; "Another Change at St. John's," *Washington Post*, May 13, 1937, p. 8.

<sup>184</sup> "Woodcock 'Asked' To Give Up Place As St. John's Head," *Washington Post*, May 13, 1937, p. 13.

<sup>185</sup> "To Name a New Head of St. John's Soon," *Baltimore Sun*, June 10, 1937, p. 4.

<sup>186</sup> Francis Pickens Miller, *Man From the Valley: Memoirs of a 20<sup>th</sup> Century Virginian*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1971), pp. 145-146; Letter to Stephen Gehrich from Mrs. Rebecca Wilson, March 22, 2007.

according to Miller at his own instigation) to take over the “all-but-bankrupt college” and together they initiated the “Great Books” program that is still used at St. John’s “and the College was saved.”<sup>187</sup> In reality the enrollments did not begin to increase until after World War Two in response to the postwar economic prosperity and the large numbers of veterans on the GI Bill. The school became co-ed in 1951.

### **Tokyo War Crimes Trials**

Woodcock’s legal knowledge and personal beliefs were put to the test when he was chosen to help draft the charter to form an international commission to try Japanese war criminals following their defeat in World War Two. Despite the fact that he was a member of what was considered to be the prosecution, Woodcock’s attitude and statements gradually began to sound more like those of a defense attorney, and he left the trials with a new respect for the Japanese and a renewed dedication to respect the rights of the accused. He came to believe that “in essentials” the Japanese “were not different from us,” and that they had “the same capacity for good and evil with which other people are endowed.”<sup>188</sup> As in so many other cases, Woodcock was not afraid to adopt an unpopular cause and defend it.

At the final “Big Three” conference held in Potsdam in July 1945, Churchill, Truman, and Stalin met to discuss the fate of post-war Europe and to make plans for what they hoped would be the final months in the war against Japan. It was at this conference that Truman learned of the successful test of the atomic bomb in the Nevada desert; information that he then shared with both Churchill and Stalin. The knowledge that they now possessed this new and extremely powerful weapon gave the Allies the confidence

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<sup>187</sup> Francis Pickens Miller, *Man From the Valley*, p. 146.

<sup>188</sup> Amos W. W. Woodcock, “Some Thoughts Upon the International Prosecution in Tokyo,” Paper Read Before the Barristers’ Club of Baltimore, May 28, 1946, p. 2.

to issue (on July 26) a proclamation to the Japanese.<sup>189</sup> The Potsdam Declaration (officially titled the “Proclamation Defining Terms for Japanese Surrender) demanded that Japan must surrender or face “prompt and utter destruction.” Included in the proclamation was the warning that “...stern justice shall be meted out to all war criminals...”<sup>190</sup>

It was only later, at the Nuremberg trials of Nazi leaders, that the term ‘war criminals’ was more clearly (but not absolutely) defined. Article VI of the London Charter of the International Military Tribunal (often referred to as the Nuremberg Charter) established three categories of crimes for which individuals could be held responsible; crimes against peace, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. Crimes against peace included “planning, preparation, initiation, or waging of a war of aggression...” War crimes included such things as the ill-treatment or killing civilians or POWs, deportation of slave labor, and wanton destruction. Crimes against humanity were those in which civilians were persecuted on the basis of political, racial, or religious affiliation, or any other atrocity not covered in the other categories.<sup>191</sup>

On August 14, 1945 President Truman designated General Douglas MacArthur as the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP) in Japan, giving MacArthur “complete command and control” in Japan.<sup>192</sup> After the Japanese surrender on September 2, 1945 MacArthur quickly set about the prosecution of Japanese war

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<sup>189</sup> The governments of the United Kingdom, the United States, and China issued the proclamation to Japan. The Soviet Union had not yet declared war on Japan, but would do so on August 9<sup>th</sup>, three days after the bombing of Hiroshima, at which time they joined in the proclamation.

<sup>190</sup> Solis Horwitz, “The Tokyo Trial”, *International Conciliation*, vol. 465, 1950, pp. 474-584, 479.

<sup>191</sup> Robert E. Conot, *Justice at Nuremberg*. (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers), 1983; Nuremberg Trial Proceedings, Vol. 1, Charter of the International Military Tribunal, <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/imt/proc/imtconst.htm>

<sup>192</sup> Philip R. Piccigallo, *The Japanese on Trial: Allied War Crimes Operations in the East, 1945-1951*. (Austin: University of Texas Press), 1979.

criminals. Although other countries would play a role in the occupation of Japan and the trials, the United States would have by far the dominant role (this *de facto* situation was formalized by the allied countries at the Moscow Conference of Foreign Ministers in December 1945)<sup>193</sup>. On November 30, 1945 Truman appointed Joseph B. Keenan as chief prosecutor, and on December 6, 1945 Keenan and his staff, “including 22 lawyers recruited by the U.S. Department of Justice”<sup>194</sup> landed at Tokyo’s Atsugi airport; among the lawyers was Amos W.W. Woodcock.<sup>195</sup> Woodcock had been invited to join the staff by John A. Darsey, Jr. who served as the Justice Department’s liaison on the prosecution team; Darsey and Keenan both knew Woodcock from his days as the Director of Prohibition and as Special Assistant to the U.S. Attorney General.

Prior to the arrival of Keenan and his staff, little preparation had been made for the prosecution of the Japanese war criminals. There was no list of who these “criminals” were, little evidence had been collected, and there were no specific crimes with which to charge anyone. One of the members of Keenan’s group later wrote that, “Rarely has any group of men undertaking a project of similar size and scope been less prepared for their task than were the original twenty-odd members of the legal staff of the

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<sup>193</sup> *Tokyo War Crimes Trial: International Military Tribunal for the Far East*, vol.1 (Tokyo: The Oriental Economist) 1946 (?)

<sup>194</sup> Arnold C.Brackman, *The Other Nuremberg: The Untold Story of the Tokyo War Crimes Trials*. (New York: Quill), 1987.

<sup>195</sup>“100 Japs Face Trial for Roles in Starting War, *Washington Post*, Dec. 1, 1945, p. 3; “Gen. Woodcock To Prosecute Jap Leaders,” *Washington Post*, Dec. 2, 1945, p. M3.

Woodcock left Maryland on Dec. 1, 1945 and was not to return until early March 1946. During this time he wrote one hundred letters (one each day), to his sister Elizabeth who was at their home, Chatillon, in Salisbury, MD. Woodcock numbered every letter; each of which began with “Dear Sister” and closed with “Devotedly, A.W.W.W.” or “Devotedly, Your brother.” In every letter he expressed his concern for Elizabeth’s health (she had cancer), and his hopes that she was getting better. Each letter bears the date and time of both Tokyo and Salisbury. The letters often included a greeting to the family dog, Jerry Flay. Julia Cramer Brown, Woodcock’s grand-niece, assembled transcribed copies of these letters in a binder and generously made them available to me.



On December 3, 1945 a group of lawyers and secretarial staff board a plane at Hamilton Field, California for the trip to Tokyo. Woodcock is waving from the top of the stairway. (Photograph owned by the author).

prosecution when they began their labors on 8 December 1945.”<sup>196</sup>

In addition to its acknowledgement of U.S. dominance in post-war Japan, the Moscow Conference of Foreign Ministers had also resulted in the formation of the Far Eastern Commission (FEC), made up of the eleven countries (Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the Netherlands, France, the United Kingdom, the United States, the Soviet Union, China, the Philippines, and India) that had been most affected by the war with Japan. Each of these countries was invited to send a judge and a prosecution team to Tokyo to join the war crimes trial. By mid-January 1946 no country had sent such representatives, so MacArthur issued (on January 19) a declaration that formally established the International Military Tribunal for the Far East (IMTFE)<sup>197</sup>, essentially notifying the other members of the FEC that the trial was soon to begin, and they had better send their legal representatives if they wanted to be part of the proceedings.

Shortly after his arrival in Japan, Woodcock was appointed to chair a committee to draft a charter for the tribunal. Despite the fact that the Nuremberg Principles had already been promulgated (and the trials themselves had been underway since mid-November 1945), Woodcock and his committee of twelve lawyers struggled with many of the same legal questions that had faced the Nuremberg jurists; was planning and launching an aggressive war really a criminal act; could individuals be held accountable for the actions of the government; what sort of legal proceedings are appropriate for a military tribunal? The charter of the IMTFE (as pronounced by MacArthur on January 19, 1946 and ultimately approved by the tribunal on April 26, 1946) borrowed heavily

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<sup>196</sup> Solis Horwitz, “The Tokyo Trial,” *International Conciliation*, 474-584.

<sup>197</sup> Arnold C. Brackman, *The Other Nuremberg*; Richard H. Minear, *Victors' Justice: The Tokyo War Crimes Trial*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 1971.

from the Nuremberg Charter. Among the most significant of the seventeen articles were<sup>198</sup>:

Article 4: declared that a simple majority was sufficient for a quorum, and a majority vote would carry all decisions including convictions and sentences.

Article 5: spelled out the same three categories of war crimes as in the Nuremberg Charter (i.e., crimes against peace, war crimes, and crimes against humanity).

Article 9: assured that each of the accused would be provided with a copy of the indictment and that they could each choose a defense attorney (or have one appointed by the tribunal).

Article 13: ruled that the tribunal would not be “bound by technical rules of evidence.” This allowed any documents (both official and unofficial), letters, diaries, and statements made by the accused to be used as evidence against them.<sup>199</sup>

Article 16: allowed for the tribunal to impose the death penalty.

Article 17: designated General Douglas MacArthur (in his role as SCAP) as the final arbiter; all sentences were to be approved by him, and could be reduced (but not increased) by him alone.

The IMTFE ultimately tried only “class A” war criminals; i.e., the twenty-eight military and political leaders who were charged with crimes against peace for planning and starting the war (those charged with “conventional war crimes” and crimes against humanity were tried by U.S. military tribunals in Yokohama).<sup>200</sup> William Webb, the prosecutor from Australia, was appointed (by MacArthur) as president of the IMTFE and served as the chief judge (and deciding vote in the case of a tie among the other ten judges). Joseph Keenan served as Chief Prosecutor, with the prosecutors from the allied

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<sup>198</sup> A copy of the IMTFE charter is in appendix I in Minear, *Victors' Justice*.

<sup>199</sup> In one of Woodcock's letters (dated February 7, 1946) he wrote that although he did not think the accused Japanese leaders had to be advised that statements they make could be used against them, he thought it would be “a fairer practice” if they were warned.

<sup>200</sup> Arnold C. Brackman, *The Other Nuremberg*.

countries designated as “associate” prosecutors. The trial began in Tokyo on May 3, 1946 and lasted until April 1948. Judgments were handed down in early November, and after waiting ten days for appeals to be presented to (and denied by) MacArthur, seven of the defendants were executed by hanging on December 23, 1948, and others began serving prison sentences that ranged from seven years to life.

Woodcock’s letters from Japan to his sister back home in Salisbury tell something about his legal work on behalf of the IMTFE, but they also describe the people and events that shaped the trial. Although Woodcock eventually left Japan and returned to the U.S. before the trials began, his observations of the early months of the IMTFE and post-war Japan are enlightening, and also tell much about Woodcock himself.

Woodcock was 62 years old when he went to Tokyo in December of 1945, and although he was no older than many of the other men in the team, he seems to have been a bit of an outsider. Although he made several short sightseeing trips in and around Tokyo, much of his free time seems to have been spent in his hotel room, writing letters and reading *Hamlet* and the *New Testament*. At one point, several of the other men invited Woodcock to move into a house they were renting, rather than remain in the hotel. Woodcock declined their offer, writing to Elizabeth that he preferred to live alone; “I dread intimacies of living.” Woodcock was also troubled by the party-like atmosphere that seemed to prevail among some of the men “I know there will be much drinking and card playing. I have no inclination, or ability, for either.” He stayed in the hotel for the entire time he was in Tokyo.

While many of the other men seemed to be enjoying the liberal lifestyle of victors in a conquered land, Woodcock watched them with a disparaging eye. Everywhere he



looked he seemed to find a breakdown of the strict morality that was such an important part of his life, and he found little enjoyment at social functions. After a Christmas party hosted by Joseph Keenan, Woodcock writes that although he enjoyed singing the Christmas carols, most of the singing was “somewhat alcoholic.” “The girls, however, generally were very awful. They seem to have completely changed as I knew them of old.” Woodcock found the Japanese girls to be much better behaved than the WACs and the Red Cross girls; “...their manners are so much more reserved and they do not smoke.” Having been a teetotaler all his life, and the Director of Prohibition less than fifteen years earlier, Woodcock was shocked by the amount of alcohol consumed by the officers. “The world of prohibition I knew is upside-down.” The slovenly appearance of military officers was another source of irritation. Having served in the military at a time when a soldier was expected to wear a crisp uniform and polished shoes, Woodcock now found that officers had the appearance of “office workers dressed up in uniforms.” Woodcock himself recognized the fact that he was out of step with the modern world. Despite complaining about alcohol consumption, smoking, dress and behavior of Americans in occupied Japan, he admits, “...perhaps it is I who am out of joint with the times.”

But much more troubling to Woodcock than the loose morality that seemed to pervade the American enclave was the ultimate question of Japanese war crimes. Despite the fact that Woodcock believed the Japanese had committed “simple assault and murder” in their attack on Pearl Harbor, his strong sense of justice caused him to question the legality of the war crimes trials. As he sought a legal precedent for the trials he recalled the Kellogg-Brian Pact of 1928, which had outlawed war as a national policy.

But the pact did not suggest any penalty for countries that violated the agreement, and certainly did not suggest any individual accountability. In fact, Woodcock had to go back to Napoleon's exile to find a case in which a country's leader had been punished for initiating a war. He wondered how the Japanese military and political leaders could be accused of war crimes when "making war was never before considered a crime" and he was deeply concerned about "the application of an *ex post facto* law," which would be "most distasteful to Americans."<sup>201</sup>

Within weeks of his arrival in Japan he wrote, "Doubts are arising in my mind as to the wisdom and legality of the whole business" and "Thus far I'm not convinced that there is legal basis for trying anybody..." Those initial doubts would be strengthened as the weeks passed. On January 19, 1946 he wrote that, "I am slowly coming to the conclusion that we have no right under the law to prosecute these leaders of Japan for making war. Certainly it has never been done before."

Much of his doubt had to do with the lack of physical evidence about the planning of the war, due to the fact that the Japanese had been busy destroying incriminating documents ever since their surrender.<sup>202</sup> But Woodcock also was not convinced that any single person, or small group of people, could be held accountable for something as monstrous as a world war; "...no man or group of men were responsible [for the war]. Certain conditions develop forces that become irrepressible." But if the prosecution had to go forward Woodcock was at least hopeful that by defining the conditions that led to the war and by determining responsibility for starting the war, future wars might be prevented. As a student of history, Woodcock believed that a "thorough knowledge of

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<sup>201</sup> Woodcock, "Some Thoughts Upon the International Prosecution in Tokyo," p. 5.

<sup>202</sup> Philip R. Piccigallo, *The Japanese on Trial*.

the past will be helpful in the future.”<sup>203</sup>

Over time Woodcock developed a sense of compassion and respect for the Japanese people. Every day on his way to and from his office he encountered “merchants who simply crouch on the sidewalks and display their pitiful wares...” and saw lines of people waiting for food, dressed in shabby clothes even in the harsh winter. Nevertheless Woodcock never felt afraid walking the streets and the Japanese people always greeted him respectfully. He marveled at the well-behaved (and quiet) Japanese babies, was on friendly terms with the young Japanese boys who cleaned his hotel room and ran errands (despite the fact that neither could speak the other’s language), and he found the young Japanese women to be “rather attractive.”

He even came to understand the plight of pre-war Japan as a result of America’s embargo on oil and steel, which began in August 1941; and although “This does not condone the attack on Pearl Harbor but, as in so many other situations, there is another side.” Despite his high sense of morality and obedience to the law, Woodcock seems to have had an open mind when it came to considering the plight of the accused. He disliked the hateful attitude that many American officers seemed to have, and he commented that, “On many faces [of American officers] I see nothing but brutality and stupidity.” Though he was serving on the side of the prosecution (as he had throughout almost his entire legal career), he criticized the narrow-mindedness of many of the American attorneys by stating, “It is a happy faculty to be able to see only one side. Actually there are always two sides.” In contrast to the vengeful attitude of many Americans, he felt that the Japanese should be shown leniency, and wrote, “I do not like the talk about ‘hanging people’.” With an eye to the future, Woodcock stated his

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<sup>203</sup> Woodcock, “Some Thoughts Upon the International Prosecution in Tokyo,” p. 10-11.

recognition of “education in tolerance and understanding as the surest preventive of war...” and that rather than occupy and rule over the defeated Japanese, the American troops “should be sent home as soon as possible.”

As his time in Tokyo wore on, Woodcock seems to have become increasingly disenchanted with the proceedings. He was getting worn down by the long workdays (they often held meetings late in the evenings), and although his health remained good he was very tired by the end of the week. This was coupled with his continued uncertainty regarding the validity of the prosecution’s case. As late as February 5, 1946 he wrote “As I have indicated before, I am coming slowly to the conclusion that their leaders have committed no crime for which they should be tried under ordinary standards of justice. Fate has made me a prosecutor in many cases. That role requires a certain amount of moral arrogance, or at least conscious rectitude. The saving justification has always been that I believed the accused had broken a law existing at the time he did the act. That condition does not seem to exist at present as to these cases. If I come definitely to that conclusion, I shall ask to be relieved. I do no (*sic*) see how I could do otherwise.”

He was also increasingly worried about his sister Elizabeth’s health. Elizabeth had surgery two months prior to his leaving for Japan, and he was greatly concerned about her recovery. Although her letters to him have not been saved, it appears from his letters that she was not being forthright about her condition. He continually asks how she is feeling, and complains to her that he has heard little about her health (the mail service was not too good in Japan, so letters often took several weeks to reach him, but even so, she seems to have said little about her health when she wrote). When he received a letter telling him that she required another operation that was scheduled for February 9, 1946

Woodcock immediately began making arrangements to return to the U.S. to be at his sister's side.<sup>204</sup> It took several days to get a flight, but he finally arrived at Doctor's Hospital in New York on March 3, where he found Elizabeth resting comfortably. His intention was to go back to Japan only after Elizabeth's health was restored, and if the prosecution team wanted him to return. Elizabeth never fully recovered, and died later that year;<sup>205</sup> whether the prosecution wanted him to return is not known, but his devotion to his sister precluded his return to Tokyo.

### Conclusion

Despite the fact that Woodcock's duties often took him far away from the Eastern Shore for prolonged periods of time, and that his vacations often involved trips to Europe and Asia, he always maintained a great fondness for his home. In an interview just after his appointment as Director of Prohibition, the journalist noted that, "... one cannot understand Col. Woodcock without he understands how deeply rooted he is in Maryland soil..."<sup>206</sup>

Elizabeth planted many bushes and flowers on the grounds around *Chatillon*, and over the years several fountains were installed. In 1931, Captain J.W. Robertson of Whitehaven, Maryland tapped an artesian well that was nicknamed "Old Faithful" because of the 6-8 foot high plume of water that gushed from it. Woodcock had a marble tablet inscribed and placed alongside the well to commemorate the captain's achievement.<sup>207</sup> In the late 1950s the city of Salisbury wanted to build a new road (Riverside Drive) along the Wicomico River; a road that would pass through the

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<sup>204</sup> "Sister Ill, Woodcock To Return From Tokyo," *Washington Post*, Feb. 26, 1946, p. 7.

<sup>205</sup> "Miss Woodcock Is Dead at 65; Md. Educator," *Washington Post*, Nov. 16, 1946, p. 4.

<sup>206</sup> "New Prohibition Head Big Small Town Man," *Washington Post*, June 29, 1930, p. M11.

<sup>207</sup> Amos W.W. Woodcock, *Elizabeth W. Woodcock of Chatillon: A Story of a Good Life*, (Salisbury, MD: Salisbury Advertiser, 1947), 43-44.

Woodcock estate. Woodcock agreed to grant the right-of-way if the city promised to protect the fountain, so the layout of the road was modified so as not to disrupt the water and a low, semi-circular stone wall was built around the fountain. For a sum of \$1.00 and the promise to preserve the fountain the city gained the right-of-way from General Woodcock.<sup>208</sup>

Among Woodcock's activities in his native Salisbury was his involvement in Asbury Methodist Church. Once, when asked when he had first joined the church he replied, "Why, I can't remember. I was born in the church."<sup>209</sup> In addition to being a lifetime member of the church, he taught the Men's Bible Class for over ten years.<sup>210</sup> The story is often told by church members of the Sunday morning that Woodcock arrived in church to find someone else sitting in "his" place; he abruptly turned on his heel and left. He dedicated three stained glass windows in memory of his parents, and sisters Elizabeth and Sallie. These windows are still on display as lighted panels in the hallway of Asbury Methodist Church in Salisbury.<sup>211</sup>

As Salisbury's preeminent military man, Woodcock participated in many of the local ceremonies honoring veterans. One Salisbury resident recalls that as a young Cub Scout in the 1950s he attended annual Memorial Day services at Parsons Cemetery. At these services General Woodcock "would give the same speech every year," and it always seemed to the young scout that the speech would last for an hour as he sat in the

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<sup>208</sup> Agreement between Amos W.W. Woodcock and the City of Salisbury, April 10, 1958; "Deed of Easement: Amos W.W. Woodcock to the City of Salisbury," March 20, 1959, Liber 468, p. 411-413; Philip C. Pete Cooper, "The Engineer in War and Peace: From Guadalcanal to Main Street," (Baltimore, MD: Gateway Press, 1996), 147-148.

<sup>209</sup> "New Prohibition Head Big Small Town Man," *Washington Post*, June 29, 1930, p. M11.

<sup>210</sup> "Lenten Study Course To Be Opened by Amos W.W. Woodcock," *The Asburian*, (Salisbury, MD), vol. 6, no. 6, (Feb. 1963), p. 1.

<sup>211</sup> "Gen. Woodcock Gives Second Window in Memory of Sister," *Salisbury Times*, March 29, 1947, p. 8.

hot sun.<sup>212</sup>

In 1951 Woodcock was appointed to the Wicomico County Board of Education by Republican Governor Theodore McKeldin,<sup>213</sup> and was elected president by the members of the Board. As president of the Board of Education, Woodcock often visited the schools, and would occasionally go into the classrooms to personally evaluate a teacher's performance.<sup>214</sup> As a strict academician Woodcock opposed the establishment of vocational-technical programs in the schools, but (in another example of his pragmatism) he ultimately recognized the need for such training and the Board ultimately voted to fund these programs.<sup>215</sup> Despite his love of music and art, Woodcock felt that schools should focus on academics, and he criticized modern trends in education by saying that "I would not have in the public schools a lot of the things they have – band practice and singing."<sup>216</sup>

It was during Woodcock's tenure on the Board that the U.S. Supreme Court handed down its ruling in the case of *Brown vs. the Board of Education* (1954), which overturned the previously accepted philosophy of "separate but equal" educational opportunities. The public schools of Maryland were racially segregated at this time, and there was much discussion regarding the implications of the Supreme Court ruling. It was Woodcock's opinion that as long as "the Board of Education of Wicomico County does not discriminate against any person because of his race or color, our Board need make no move toward desegregation." It was therefore decided that there would be no

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<sup>212</sup> Phillip Hotton, "Remembering Memorial Day Celebrations of Past," *Daily Times*, May 29, 2007, p. A6.

<sup>213</sup> "Grave Shortage Seen of Md. Teachers," *Washington Post*, May 17, 1951, p. B2.

<sup>214</sup> Letter from Richard Cooper to Dee Middleton, March 28, 1997.

<sup>215</sup> Mary L. Nock, *It Was a Joy and a Pleasure*, (Maryland, privately printed, 1979), 40.

<sup>216</sup> "Gen. Amos Woodcock Dies at 80 On Shore," *Baltimore Sun*, January 17, 1964, p. B24.

effort to try to “mix the races at this time...”<sup>217</sup> When Woodcock visited a local “colored school” he found that the students did not have “equal facilities” compared to other (white) schools, and he recommended that the county find money (“and quickly”) for a new school for colored children.<sup>218</sup> This initiative led to the construction of the Cooper Mill School near Sharptown in Wicomico County, MD.

Woodcock served as president of the school board until 1959. His term was supposed to last until 1963, but he resigned when he failed to be re-elected as board president. His failure to be re-elected president was not due to any shortcoming, but rather that the newly elected Democratic Governor Millard Tawes selected fellow Democrats to serve on the board, and they elected one of their own as president. Nevertheless, Woodcock considered the vote to be an indication of their disapproval of his presidency, and he resigned. In a brief parting statement Woodcock admonished the Board to plan for the construction of new schools to keep up with population growth in the county, and to follow his “workable and fair interpretation of the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment.” Presumably this latter statement referred to the Amendment’s “equal protection” clause, and Woodcock’s belief that “separate but equal” educational facilities were not only achievable, but even beneficial to both “colored” and “white” students. He took pride in his efforts to improve the quality of “colored” schools.<sup>219</sup>

In early January 1964 (at the age of 80), Woodcock became seriously ill with leukemia and was so weak that he had difficulty speaking. He was taken to Johns

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<sup>217</sup> Minutes of the Wicomico County Board of Education, June 14, 1955; vol. 11, p. 163. New, segregated high schools had opened in 1954, and Wicomico County did not begin integration of its public schools until 1964.

<sup>218</sup> Minutes of the Wicomico County Board of Education, March 27, 1956, vol. 12, p. 18.

<sup>219</sup> Minutes of the Wicomico County Board of Education, May 12, 1959; vol. 13, p. 67-68; “Woodcock Quits School Board in Shake-Up,” *Salisbury Times*, May 13, 1959, p. 1; “To the Victors Belong the Spoils,” *Salisbury Times*, May 14, 1959, p. 6.



Hopkins by his nephew and grandnephew, Nevins Todd and Dr. Nevins Todd, Jr. for treatment, but after ten days he asked to return to Salisbury; it must have been clear to the General that he was dying, and he wanted to be home in his beloved *Chatillon*.<sup>220</sup> He died on January 17, 1964 and his funeral (held at *Chatillon*) was attended by friends and dignitaries. His obituary appeared in many prominent newspapers, and condolences were sent by many of his former associates.<sup>221</sup> He is buried in Parsons Cemetery in Salisbury alongside his father, his mother, and his sisters Sarah and Elizabeth.

Somewhat surprisingly (in view of the fact that he had no close family) Woodcock's will did not leave his home, possessions, or money to a church, organization, or any of the many academic institutions with which he had been affiliated during his life (although he did leave a \$1000 bond to St. John's College to provide an annual prize in mathematics; but this prize is apparently no longer given). Woodcock's simple, one-page will left various amounts of money, jewelry, and furnishings to his relatives, and provided \$1000 and free rent to his housekeeper for the remainder of her life. He asked that the remainder of his estate be called the "Estate of Elizabeth W. Woodcock," and that the income from the estate "be enjoyed in her memory" by the various descendants of his parents.<sup>222</sup>

Fourteen years after his death, the home he called *Chatillon* was moved

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<sup>220</sup> Letter to Roselda and Katharine Todd (Woodcock's nieces) from Nevins Todd, Sr., Jan. 7, 1964; Biographical Sketch of Amos W.W. Woodcock written by Nevins Todd, Sr., March 21, 1964.

<sup>221</sup> "Gen. Woodcock Rites to be Held Here Sunday," *Salisbury Times*, Jan. 18, 1964, p. 1; "Amos W.W. Woodcock is Dead; Headed Prohibition Enforcement," *New York Times*, Jan. 18, 1964, p.23; "A Gentleman and a Scholar," *Salisbury Times*, Jan. 18, 1964, p.4; "Amos W.W. Woodcock, Soldier and Prosecutor," *Washington Post*, Jan. 18, 1964, p. B2; "Gen. Woodcock, War Hero and Volstead Sleuth," *Washington Post*, Jan. 19, 1964, p. B11; Resolution from the Faculty and Students of St. John's College expressing sympathy to the Woodcock family, Jan. 18, 1964.

<sup>222</sup> Will, Amos W.W. Woodcock, June 22, 1956.

approximately 100 yards to a location along Riverside Road,<sup>223</sup> and the grounds of the estate were sold. Condominiums (801 Riverside Drive) were built on the site of Woodcock's *Chatillon* estate and "Old Faithful," the fountain that was once the centerpiece of his garden was covered with heavy steel plates. On June 20, 2008 the restored fountain was reopened in a ceremony attended by city officials and descendants of the Woodcock family.<sup>224</sup> The marble tablet commemorating Captain J.W. Robertson is still present, although time and wear have made it difficult to read.

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<sup>223</sup> "A Golden Era Ends As 'Chatillon' Is Moved," *Daily Times*, April 12, 1978, p. 1. The current address of the house is 712 Riverside Road.

<sup>224</sup> "County Makes Good on Fountain Pledge," *Daily Times*, June 19, 2008, p. B1.

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